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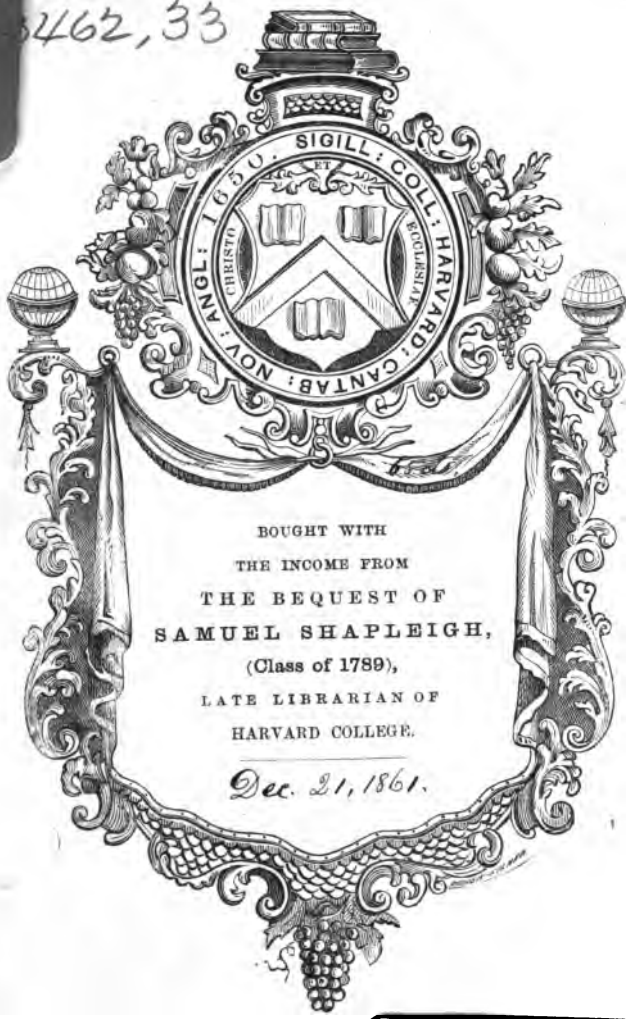

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THE

MOORLAND MINSTREL.

By THOMAS MACQUEEN,

MASON,

BARKIP, NEAR BEITH,

AUTHOR OF "THE EXILE," AND OTHER POEMS.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED BY

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THE MOORLAND MINSTREL.

AN ADDRESS TO GARNOCK.

Respectfully inscribed, as a token of Friendship, to Mr. Wm. Dobie, Grangevale.

Oft! Garnock, oft on this lone spot,
In boyhood's brighter day,
With feelings ne'er to be forgot,
I mark'd thy waters onward float—
Wave after wave away.

And I was young—and on this brow
Grief ventured not to trace
Those furrows that becloud it now,
Nor had my young soul learned to bow
Beneath the world's disgrace.

And I marvell'd much, as speedily
Thy dark waves floated on;
What length and breadth had glided by?
Whence wast thou—whither went'st—and why
Thy waters ne'er went done?

But years on years have sped away,
And in their devious course
Have blent my auburn locks with grey,
And scattered wrinkles and decay,
And tremblings of remorse.

The sacred ties of life's young day
Were long since forced to sever,
And the holy sounds of love's sweet lay—
Youth's melody and mirth so gay—
Are silent now for ever.

Less lovely spring's green robes appear—
Less bright the moon's pure beam;
The summer sun looks dull and drear,
And the former charms of nature wear
The semblance of a dream.

The lightsome heart—the laughing eye—
The hope that lured me on—
The voice that sung my lullaby,
And the youthful peers that shared my joy—
These all are dead and gone.

The budding spring—the blooming May—
The blackbird's soothing strain—
The schoolboy's gambols on the way,
But bring to mind a happier day,
That cannot come again.

I've drank the common cup of woe
From friendship's frozen hand;
I've wandered heartless to and fro,
And suffered pangs that none can know,
Mid simp'ring follies bland.

Again I come—but changed in all
Save the unhonoured name,
To list thy once-loved waterfall
Pour forth its midnight madrigal,
Eternally the same.

No change has come on thee—the years
That fleetly have gone by,
And mingled sorrows, sighs, and tears,
And blighted hopes and fostered fears,
Have failed to drain thee dry.

Ages elapsed have seen thee glide,
Thou lonely moorland river;
Yet on thy undiminished tide,
Wave after wave thy bubbles ride,
Majestical as ever.

In pyramid, or tower, or tomb,
Man struggles to obtain
Reversion of the dreaded doom;
Of being lost in times to come;
But hush—the hope is vain.

Yon tower, of rude uncharter'd day,
That frowns above thy stream,
In crumbling atoms seems to say:—
"*Man and his labours pass away*
Unheeded as a dream."

And thou wert ere Glengarnock's wall
Had rear'd its feudal head;
Thou saw'st the glories of its hall,
Thou sing'st the requiem of its fall
When countless years have fled.

Yea, thou wert ere frail fleeting man
Earth's flow'ry surface trode,
Thou saw'st him first presume to scan,
And reason falsely from the plan
That told him of a God.

Thou saw'st his Druid altars dyed
With blood of burning men;
With bow and quiver by his side,
He rang'd for prey the forest wide
The mountain and the glen.

He changed his painted skin and hair,
His creed and sacrifice—
And, humming through the woods of Blair,
Thou heard'st Saint Winning's ev'ning prayer
To countless deities.

Thou see'st him still the child of change,
Nor less the child of thrall,
Abjuring nature's healthy range
For prison-toil and commerce strange,
With scarce a God at all.

And yet thou art unchanged; the flood
Hath foam'd and fled away,
Leaving thy calm and native mood
To sing to hill, and vale, and wood,
Thy philosophic lay.

Down, down to ocean's dread abyss
Thy waters, as of yore,
In endless waves successive press;
Yet, strange! thy stream grows nothing less,
Nor grows the ocean more.

Roll on, thou liquid glassy sheet;
Roll on, methinks I see,
In thy unbroken waters fleet,
A sign, a pledge, an emblem meet
Of immortality.

My toil-worn frame, like thine, may seem
  Fast sinking to decay;
My life, or spirit, like thy stream,
Lit up at heaven's unfading beam,
  Must glow, and glow for aye.

Glide on, thou moorland river—roll
  Thy dark waves to the sea—
So speeds my fleeting, deathless soul,
To some far, strange, mysterious goal
  In vast eternity.

VERSES ADDRESSED TO MR. J. HARVIE,

ON THE DEATH OF HIS FRIEND,

JOHN MONTGOMERY, JUN. RASHLYGATE, KILBIRNIE.

I.

How frail a thing is life! It still has been,
Since man put on existence, but a shade—
The gilded shadow of a flickering scene—
The painted glow-worm glittering in the glade,
The glancing halo on Death's verge display'd,
Pursued, possess'd, and prized—but still unknown
Its origin or essence, and but made
Proverbial by its brittleness alone,
A blushing feeble flower that soon as grasp'd is gone.

II.

And man loves life, and only lacks the art
Of making it eternal.—Wealth and power,
With all their sorcery, can ne'er impart
A fair compense for one gay guiltless hour

Of unimbitter'd life; but follies sour
The sweets we would preserve, and often sever
Vitality's fond ties—Death's shadows low'r
Where pleasure shines—but faith forsakes us never;
We squander life away, yet hope to live for ever!

III.

And thou art sad—another friend has died—
All friends, like flowers, are transitory joys,
Gems glittering in the sunshine of noontide,
Maturer playthings, in the round of toys,
That fill the ring of life.—Possession cloys
The sense, in all save friendships: these survive
All changes—Death oft severs, not destroys,
Those sensitive endearments which still thrive
O'er new-made graves, to wish their inmates still alive.

IV.

The human multitude are friends at birth:
Pride makes distinctions—these, in turn, create
The envyings and jealousies of earth,
Which end in bloodshed and eternal hate;

Yet sager moralists have dared to prate
And rouse our wrath 'gainst "*nat'ral enemies!*"
The denizens of some unfetter'd state,
Who spurn the despot and his base allies,
That drag us on through blood to break the sacred ties.

V.

But what is despot, foreigner or foe,
Or what are all the myriads of our race,
But a few friends, all straggling to and fro
On the dread verge of an infinite space;
And each who drops into the dark abyss,
Was friend to some, and heaves a surge of grief
On the few mourners round his vacant place,
Who in their turn plunge in to find relief,
And heave their cloud of spray as doleful and as brief.

VI.

Thy friend, perhaps, was of that favoured few
Whom nature moulds for virtuous esteem,
With guiltless purpose and expanded view—
One whose whole soul was friendship's genial gleam:

Perchance he loved the philanthropic dream
Of making man what man ought still to be,
The child of reason, sporting in the beam
Of mutual benevolence, or he
Might long to break the chain that fetter'd liberty.

VII.

Perchance he loved the rural rugged brow
Of untamed nature, and attempt'd to scan
Creation's ample page, or sought to bow
The mystified dull theories of man;
Of earth, its age, its origin, and plan:
Perchance he worship'd at the holy shrine
Of truth immutable, whose splendid dawn
Bursts through the gloom with radiance benign,
And sheds immortal rays of essences divine.

VIII.

Perchance he wander'd in the lowly vale
Of humble life, where science seldom shone,
But where Vulgarity's unpolish'd tale
Was of ideal *wonderfuls* alone:

Perchance his soul loath'd the enfeebling zone
Of freezing prejudice, and lov'd to soar
The summits of a richer clime, o'ergrown
With fairer flowers, where philosophic lore
Sheds purer, holier rays on things unknown before.

IX.

Yea, haply he, though nurtur'd in the shade
Of rude simplicity, at times could feel
The sacred aspirations which have led
The van progressive of the common-weal;
Oft would he sigh, and, sighing, seek to speel
The rueful eminence of destiny;
And, as each effort fail'd, would calmly kneel,
Invoke contentment with a wistful eye,
And o'er his adverse lot heave one regretful sigh.

X.

Hope disappointed shook his youthful frame;
The sick'ning soul upon herself reclin'd;
Fate unpropitious quench'd th' aspiring flame—
Enfeebled matter, sinking from the mind,

Left it with all its energies behind,
To mark the ruin of its grosser mate,
To see, and feel, and taste death, uncombin'd
With aught oblivious that could mitigate
The bitter consciousness of an untimely fate.

XI.

The world and he are parted—he is gone,
And soon shall be forgotton, ev'n by those
Who sorrow for his death, and weep.—Anon
The midnight wind or zephyr sweet that blows,
In plaintive sympathy, o'er the repose
Of the lone empire of the reckless dead,
Or the green robe which gen'rous nature throws
O'er her poor nameless sleeping children's bed,
Alone shall mark the spot where haply may be read

HIS EPITAPH.

Born but to feel what 'tis to be,
Liv'd but to prove the love of life—
Died in youth's morn, and here proclaims
The end of all terrestrial strife.

TO MISS MARION AIRD, KILMARNOCK.

LADY, there are hours of pleasure,
  Hours of happiness and love,
Smiling sunshine shedding treasure
  Round youth's footsteps, as we rove.

Sylvan bank and fragrant blossom,
  Warbling minstrel, woodland stream,
Hopeful heart and bounding bosom,
  Soothe us like a hallow'd dream.

Blushing earth and placid ocean,
  Balmy air and azure sky,
Fill us with the blissful notion
  That existence is but joy.

Forced by young and ardent passion,
  Through youth's vale we gambol on,
Lured by hope, or led by fashion,
  Dreaming these will ne'er be done.

But, alas! the fawning breezes
Soon to bitter tempests rise;
Disappointment falls, and freezes
Half the circle of our joys.

Hast thou mark'd the gentle lily
Drooping on its slender stem,
Blanch'd and wo-worn, sick and silly,
'Neath its dewy diadem?

Whilst its blest and honied treasures
Slept, unconscious to decay—
Hast thou thought how human pleasures
Pass like lily-leaves away?

I have sigh'd in deepest wailing
O'er the lovely dying rose—
I mourn'd not that the flower was failing,
Nor wept a load of present woes;

But in each declining feature
Memory trac'd a former day,
When the frail ephem'ral creature
Trifled time and life away.

Sad and silent is the sorrow
Thinking mortals must endure;
Ev'ry joy we strive to borrow,
Renders former joys obscure.

Youth's fond flutter—Love's caresses,
Sober wedlock's tranquil bliss,
Fortune, fame, and friendship bless us,
Fade and foster more distress.

Golden gleams, at random flying,
Promise happiness on earth;
But the chilling thought of dying
Blights the blossom in its birth.

Still sweet hope, with heav'nly feeling,
Points to something far away,
Soaring proudly, and unsealing
Glories of a future day.

Soothing hope—celestial beauty,
Still to guiltless spirits given,
Cheering grief and sweet'ning duty,
Thou art virtue's certain heaven.

THOUGHTS ON THE DEATH

OF

WILSON DOBIE WILSON, ESQ.

Who died suddenly on the 1st day of June, 1838.

I.

DEATH'S javelin strikes again, a harsh sharp stroke,
A sort of reckless sending to the dead,
A shudder on life's strings, as though they broke,
Contorted on the wheel, or quiv'ring bled
Beneath the axe that severs traitor's head;
These and war's engines check the half-drawn breath—
They 're mortal in a moment:—but a dread
More awful seizes us when thus *fair Death*
Stalks in convulsions dire, personified as Wrath.

II.

And not a moment speeds, and not a breath
Blows o'er this little busy world of thought,
But bears to some the venomed shaft of Death,
Or carries on its bosom one deep draught

Of sorrow's potion—Life, indeed, seems fraught,
Despite of all Utopian dreamers say,
With misery and mourning, strangely wrought
Into a generaliz'd costume, which may
Be worn by varied thousands each successive day.

III.

And genius dies—and all her friends, in turn,
Like rainbows in the clouds, soon disappear:
One half of all the human-race just mourn
The other half, and think the doom severe,
And worth and learning are laid on the bier
By one dread shock! Hearts bleed and weep,
And life seems like a lonely wild, and drear,
And sorrow shrouds us in her sables deep,
Till Time's dull lullaby rocks memory to sleep.

IV.

Our perish'd friends wear slowly from the mind,
Else life would sink beneath the weight of grief;
Yet are their memories lastingly enshrined
On the soul's tablet, graven in relief,

And there are moments when, like tyrant chief,
They rise and trample on our gayer joys—
They fling a darkness visible, though brief,
A momentary gloom, to paralise,
And quiver on the heart in deep half-uttered sighs.

V.

Oft have I stood in autumn's dusky ev'n,
When night's dark shadows crept along the ground,
And mark'd upon the glowing verge of heav'n
The sun's last ray in partial darkness drown'd,
And I have turn'd and gazed all round and round
On the dun-shaded little circle, where
Dwelt all my friends; and at each point I found
On memory's dial-plate the hand of care
Was pointing to a blank—*for Death was lately there.*

VI.

And 'tis a curious feeling when the soul
Journeys in solitude o'er the lone past,
And, peering in the tomb, brings up the whole
Of former friendships, sweet, too sweet to last;

They come upon us darkly, like some vast
Desert of loneliness, and seem to bring
An echo moaning as the midnight blast
That vibrates on some melancholy string—
'Tis like a winter dirge that bodes no coming spring.

VII.

Farewell, departed friends, farewell—
I wish I could forget you—but 'tis vain—
And *thou* for whom is meant that cold dull knell,
Which in the old rude belfrey shakes the fane—
Farewell!—I knew thee not; but sweeter strain
Than my poor harp can sing was sung to thee;*
Thou wert the friend of genius, and the train
Of mourners o'er thy bier are friends to me,
And claim, as friendship's pledge, my warmest sympathy.

BARKIP, *June*, 1838.

* It was to this gentleman that Mr. Allan Cunningham dedicated his best poem, "The Maid of Elvar."

LINES

Written with a Pencil on a Cast of the late ARCH. FLETCHER, *Esq., Advocate, placed in a Niche of the Wall in the Pleasure Ground of* JAMES DOBIE, *Esq., of Crummock, Beith.*

A PORTRAIT, bust, an epitaph, or cast,
A speechless lip, a dark and lifeless eye,
One lone thought wand'ring o'er the dreary past,
One secret, half-suppress'd, half-uttered sigh,
Tell Friendship's death, and tell—*how loath she is to die.*

TO A LADY.

I.

SAY, Lady, hast thou ever felt
  Life's heartless, weary loneliness?
Or hath thy fluttering spirit knelt
  To soothe the sorrows of distress?
Or, lull'd in fortune's fond caress,
  Say, have thy few years glided by,
In those gay sunshines that repress
  The sympathies of woman's sigh?

II.

Ah! no—it cannot be: the world
  In which we live is full of woe;
The smoothest stream is sometimes curl'd,
  The fondest breast oft fails to glow;
Error and grief connected flow
  From social ignorance and pride;
Our selfishness still dooms it so—
  We grasp what Nature has denied.

III.

O what is happiness?—The Sage
Would seek it in the hermit's cell,
The Student in the classic page,
The Hero in the battle-knell,
The Lover in the hawthorn dell;
The Devotee disclaims the earth,
His goddess in the skies must dwell—
He loves things of celestial birth.

IV.

'Tis thus our varied notions lead
To varied pursuits, and anon
We languish, hope, sigh, suffer, bleed,
Then curse our fate, and hurry on;
The same path trac'd, the same prize won,
Years fleetly follow years, till all
That's fair and sweet in life is gone,
And leaves but bitterness and gall.

V.

O there were brighter days than these,
Lit by a purer, holier beam,

When young hearts lived and leapt at ease,
Unconscious that the flick'ring gleam
Of childhood sped as speeds the stream—
That its blest light would soon be o'er,
And but remember'd as a dream,
Which pleas'd, but pleases now no more.

VI.

And there were days of love, and they,
Like other days, had sorrows too,
And half the bright and half the gay
Were scarcely realis'd as true—
Love's roses all are bath'd in dew
When gather'd in Life's morning soon;
But tears and sorrows dim their hue
Ere life has reach'd its riper noon.

VII.

And I have lov'd—yea, fondly lov'd,
And felt the spirit's fancied bliss,
And half Elysium's fables prov'd
In Angelina's loveliness;

But pleasures all are frail, and this,
Like other pleasures, passed away,
And Angelina's heart now is
As cold as pity's powerless ray.

VIII.

Yet there is happiness on earth,
Though love and friendship both decay,
Though youth's gay joys and manhood's mirth
Grow dark in age's glimmering ray;
The clouds that dim the summer's day
Are only clouds, though black as night,
And need but to be chas'd away
To leave a world of all that's bright.

IX.

Virtue alone is happiness,
Peace only dwells amidst her rays—
All life is cold and comfortless
If 'reft of virtue's radiant blaze:
Mankind are wand'ring in the maze
Of misty error—all their aim

Is golden gewgaws and displays
Of worthless wealth and fruitless fame.

X.

O who would woo the giddy gaze
Of idle, thoughtless, gaping crowd,
Who love but tinsel'd toys, and praise
All levity with plaudits loud:
Who of such clamour would be proud,
That knows the frailty of such fame,
I would not bow—I never bow'd
To beg the city for a name.

XI.

I once had dreams, and prospects too,
Of better days and purer joys;
I deem'd hope's promises were true
Of painless worlds and cloudless skies:
These visions perish'd!—and the ties
Which bind me now to real life,
Are tangible beyond disguise,
A helpless offspring and a wife.

XII.

No golden gleams allure me now,
I hear hope's whisper with a smile—
Gray hairs are gath'ring o'er my brow,
Which say I live to think and toil.
The learn'd and wealthy may beguile
My weary ev'nings with their lore,
But morn's loud bell sounds the turmoil,
The cheerless sound of "*Labour more.*"

XIII.

And O it is a fearful doom
To look through each successive year
That lies between us and the tomb,
And see nought but a drudg'ry drear;
The seasons pass and re-appear,
And night and day revolving flee,
But nought of change, and nought of cheer,
Save sleep and labour, comes to me.

XIV.

The ev'ning sun is setting mild,
His beams are on the green churchyard,

There fortune's fool and labour's child
Alike receive his fond regard:
'Tis true my lot in life is hard—
The good I do may be but small;
But Virtue is her own reward,
And sleep and sunshine come to all.

APOSTROPHE TO THE CORPSE OF MY DAUGHTER, MARY.

I.

Ay, little Mary, thou art gone,
And cauld, and pale, and lifeless now,
The chilliness o' death sits on
Thy dimpled cheek and bonny brow;
Thy pure wee lips are blanch'd and sad,
The film is on thy dark blue e'e—
Those lips ance lisp'd to mak' me glad,
That e'e ance sparkled joy for me.

II.

Ah! rueful change—the glance, the smile,
The lisp, the kiss, the fond embrace,
The bairnlie prank, the winning wile,
Hae perished, and hae left nae trace
Save sorrow, or that gentle frown
Hung owre thy e'ebrows, meant to chide
The livin' fugitive, now flown
To tell the worm that thou hast died.

III.

I lov'd thee, Mary—yea, my soul
Hung doatin' owre thy infant joys:
Where art thou?—wert thou as the whole
O' human frailty's bauble toys,
A moment bright, then quicklie gane
To be replac'd by shadows new?
Ay, thou o' fleetin' things wert ane,
A shade mair lively, but less true.

IV.

I canna weep—'twad be unwise;
I hae wept owre thy cradle, but
'Twas for thy strugglin' agonies—
These now are clos'd, and hence hae shut
The saut springs o' my sympathie;
But my affection's purest glow
Is lastin' as my memorie,
And lives tho' tears refuse to flow.

V.

A thousand thoughts maun mak' it live:
Thy mother's sigh—her silent tear;

Thy little playthings still maun give
Fresh pangs to recollections dear;
And ay at mornin', night, or noon,
When at our humble board I see
An empty seat—an idle spoon,
My thoughts will wander after thee.

VI.

And will we never meet? The doom
Is surely harsh, if a' those sweet
Endearments live but for the tomb,
And only thrive that worms may eat;
If we live, love—die, mix with earth,
Assume new forms in endless reign,
But never, never mair come forth,
Endear'd as sire and child again.

VII.

I wish—I hope—but all I know
Is that the dull footsteps of time
May sear affection's fondest glow,
May silence memory's sweetest chime;
Flowers on thy grave may bloom and fall,
And fate may smile or frown on me,

But years can never mair recal
The pleasure I hae felt in thee.

VIII.

Farewell, my child—I canna weep,
I only wept at thy distress;
Now that thou'rt hush'd in lasting sleep,
I feel the soul's sad loneliness,
But canna weep:—yet through life's day,
If blest wi' thought and memorie,
When prattlin' bairns around me play,
I'll heave a father's sigh for thee.

BARKIP, 10*th Jan.* 1839.

THE MARCH OF INTELLECT.

Respectfully inscribed to Mr. Arch. Clark, Beith.

I.

It came—and its step was as light as the breath
Of the gentlest zephyr that fawns on the ev'n—
It came with a stillness as silent as death,
But it breath'd a benignity soothing as heaven;
It started—it gaz'd, as by stealth, far abroad,
It mark'd the deep bondage of vassaliz'd man,
It shrunk and recoil'd, and it marvel'd if God
Had sketch'd such a doom in the primitive plan.

II.

It came—there were whisp'rings abroad in the earth,
Deep mutter'd to deep in a mystified tone,
Frowns, curses, and threats were heard issuing forth,
And tortures and shackles were forging anon:
It smil'd on the fetters—it triumph'd in scorn,
It spurn'd the frail arm rear'd only to bind,
Its march-hymn afar on the echoes was borne,
Proclaiming the hast'ning redemption of mind!

III.

It comes!—and its whispers to thunders have grown—
All nature elastic bends under its tread;
O'er ocean and earth its fire-chariots have flown,
And the lip of the mighty is quivering with dread;
Corruption, convuls'd, sees her nostrums turn weak,
And nods to Oppression, in speechless despair,
As the engines roll on, that shall speedily break
The chains they had destin'd the millions to wear.

IV.

It *will* come!—and the great ones of earth shall turn pale;
The yoke of the bondsman, enfeebled, shall shake;
All tyrants shall join in one desolate wail,
And empires' foundations will tremble and quake;
Thrones shall crash, and the sceptre, beclotted with blood,
Will shiver to shreds in the hands of its lord,
And a voice, fierce and awful, will echo aloud,
That "*Freedom, the Birthright of Mind, is restor'd!*"

TO MR. ROBERT CRAIG,

Manager at Doura Coalworks,

ON THE DEATH OF HIS SON, JOHN.

I.

O WHEREFORE art thou sad?
Are all thy prospects gone?
Died all thy hopes and gaiety
With that beloved one?
O hast thou thought how all our joys
Are hung on frailty's feeble ties?

II.

Dark clouds will often float
On summer's clear blue sky,
And fairest sunshines oft presage
Fierce tempests hovering nigh;
The halcyon slumb'ring o'er the plain
Bursts forth in floods of thunder-rain.

III.

Worlds wither and grow old,
And pass we know not where,
And suns grow dark, and bright stars fall,
And Death swims on the air:
The lively eye, the hectic glow,
Oft screens the cankerworm below.

IV.

The lily blooms at morn,
The rose blows at mid-day,
And ere the ev'ning sun is set,
Their fragrance is away:
Earth, air, and sky—all nature's range,
Proclaim one universal change.

V.

Still, still there is a chord
Within the human breast,
A sympathy that ever yawns,
And never can get rest—
'Tis some strange feeling of the soul,
To hold the passions in control.—

VI.

It sorrows o'er dark clouds,
Sighs o'er the fading flower,
And flings a strange unutter'd thrill
O'er Ruin's mouldering tower—
Though change surrounds it every day,
It cannot smile upon decay.—

VII.

It lends a plaintive tone
To midnight's moaning blast,
And broods, with pleasing dulness, o'er
The unreturning past;
Looks wistful after ev'ning's sun,
Or rainbow's hues, so quickly gone.—

VIII.

It breathes a holier throb,
More sacred and more deep,
When o'er the grassy grave it kneels,
To moralise and weep;
And, ah! its purest, warmest breath,
Is breath'd o'er youth and beauty's death!—

IX.

It makes us feel the pang
Of young Life's sad decline,
And shakes the heart-strings mournfully
O'er such a son as thine—
For thine was one whom worth endear'd,
Till vice and virtue both rever'd.

X.

He felt his feeble frame
Part of the wondrous whole;
His spirit only recognised
One universal soul:
In youth he thought with manhood's mind
And lov'd and blest all human kind.

XI.

He knew no little creed,
He breath'd no party prayer,
His sympathy but sought to know,
"Does Nature suffer there?"
On being's shrine his spirit knelt,
And ev'ry pang she heav'd was felt.

XII.

And O, 'tis sad to part
With friends and kindred dear,
The heart of common friendship bleeds
Above the sacred bier;
The soul, in dreary wanderings toss'd,
Lets lewder scenes and thoughts be lost.

XIII.

'Tis sad to see the eye
Of youth and beauty's bloom
Look wistful on life's flickering scenes,
As sinking to the tomb—
Life-loving prayers the bosom swell,
And lingering lips scarce bid farewell.

XIV.

But sadder far to see
The bright and lively mind
Extinguish'd like the falling star,
That leaves no trace behind—
All that had pleas'd us heretofore,
Darken'd, to be relit no more.

XV.

O, who can calculate
The darkness of the cloud,
Between a thing of living thought
And dead-bones in a shroud,
Or measure that mysterious breath,
The boundary line 'twixt life and death!

XVI.

Perchance it may be vain
To sorrow and to weep,
When those we love are summon'd first
To Nature's dreamless sleep—
For sure the years can be but few
Till we shall brook her slumbers too.

XVII.

Yet I have often felt,
And thou canst surely feel,
That sorrow which no balm of life,
Nor balm of time, can heal—
That feeling of the drear and lone,
Which lives with times and pleasures gone.

XVIII.

And though we would forget
The fond lamented one,
And though we never breathe his name,
Save in a whisper'd tone,—
Yet, ah! that name we loath to hear,
Is bath'd with many a silent tear.

EPISTLE TO MY FRIEND,

JAMES CRAWFORD, HALL OF CALDWELL.

I.

WHILE Nature flings her winter hap
Owre muir an' dale an' mountain tap,
While owre the Mistylaw
The cauld blue sky at times is seen,
Hauf dim, hauf bricht, glint forth between
The thick'ning showers o' snaw.

II.

The muirland flocks flee frae the hicht,
An', 'neath the bleak an' lanely nicht,
Cower frienlie round the sheil;
The hungry bush-birds seem to form
In social order 'gainst the storm,
And clust'ring seek a beil.

III.

This winter union is richt common—
Man draws to man, and whyles to woman,
And woman's social too—
A' love society at e'en,
And I, my honest, worthy frien',
Sit down to crack wi' you.—

IV.

An' first, we 'll cautiously consider,
If men and beasts thus creep thegither
For mutual happiness;
Syne speir if nature's grand design,
Frae freezing Iceland to the Line,
Be comfort or distress.

V.

In ilka clime, frae zone to zone,
Whaur sounds pale misery's chilling groan,
Whaur grief is breath'd in sighs,
There, too, some kindred spirits meet,
Wi' balmy consolations sweet,
To weep and sympathise:

VI.

Or whaur the transient gleam o' joy
Blinks round us as it journeys by,
Blest momentary gleam;
Joy is not joy—'tis sordid care,
Unless some friend—some partner, share
The gay illusive dream.

VII.

The hauf-singed African, whose lore
Is chain'd to Niger's endless roar,
Beyond himsel' can feel—
Beyond his friends, beyond his hame,
Ev'n to the "White man" ance he came,
Wi' proffer'd friendship leal.

VIII.

The Laplander, releas'd from toil,
Draws near his cruize o' burnin' oil
To pass his winter drear—
The inmates o' his humble shed
Full friendlie share their board and bed
Wi' the sagacious deer.

IX.

Whaur Tell's rude mountains, wrapt in snow
And everlasting glaciers, show
An everlasting cauld,
Ev'n *there* the gen'rous Swiss is found
The noblest soul that treads the ground,
Warm, friendlie, blythe, and bauld:

X.

In him no national jealousies
Congeal the softer human ties—
He smiles on foreign thrall;
He knows his native hills are free,
And fears no foeman's tyrannie,
But loves and welcomes all.

XI.

Yon lone—yon solitary thing,
That sits beside the bubbling spring,
And gnaws her bitter crust,
Though frae a' human friendship driven,
Ay woos wi' crumbs the birds o' heaven,
Which hunger learns to trust.

XII.

Thus frae the Ind to Alpine storm,
Whaur Nature wears her native form,
Apart frae system's dress,
That noble, active thing ca'd *mind*,
Appears instinctively inclin'd
To scatter happiness.

XIII.

Why is it, then, that man appears
A thing o' suffering, sighs, and tears,
Deep drench'd in blood and crime?
Why is't that the Eternal's throne
Hears but one never-ending groan,
One heart-corroding chime?

XIV.

Far ower external Nature gaze,
And mark her all-impartial ways,
Her just, unchanging laws,
And say if in her sovereign reign
Grief, poverty, and blood and pain,
Find an efficient cause.

XV.

The Indian has his yams and roots,
Th' Italian has his wines and fruits,
The Scotchman has his bread;
The Greenlander and Esquimaux
Hae fish and flesh and furs, and a'
That serve their little need.

XVI.

Ilk clime seems fated to produce
Whate'er's demanded for the use
O' a' that treads its soil;
And varied tastes and temp'ratures
Need silk and cotton, wool and furs,
And bread and beef and oil.

XVII.

All-gen'rous Nature flings abroad
Proofs of an universal God,
Beneficent and wise,
Whose lavish'd bounties, through all time,
No kindred, colour, creed, nor clime,
Nor rank, will recognise.

XVIII.

Sun, moon, and stars their glory shed
On giant's and on pigmy's head,
With equal fostering care;
The dews descend, and falls the rain,
And monarch's and poor peasant's grain
Alike receives its share.

XIX.

As pure the tinge of beauty glows,
As clear the rosie fluid flows,
As healthy and serene;
As sweet the mantling, blush and meek,
On milkmaid's as on lady's cheek,
In damsel as in queen.

XX.

Whence seek we for the sorrow, then,
Since nature ower baith beasts and men
Is pouring happiness?
Why, midst enough o' claise and meat,
This cauld, coarse night should thousands greet
Wi' hunger and distress?

XXI.

Ah! there's a curse has gane abroad,
It withers hauf the works o' God,
It changes men to beasts—
It bellows frae the lowest hell,
It echoes but one damning knell,—
The curse o' kings and priests.

XXII.

This is the curse that sears the earth,
And hurries desolation forth,
In all her dread array—
In darkest mummeries enshrin'd,
It prostrates th' immortal mind,
Till all her powers give way:

XXIII.

It narrows, freezes hauf the soul,
Distracts the great harmonious whole
With blind Sectarian pride,
Pours one unmix'd, unbroken flood
Of precious, guiltless, human blood,
Till earth's blest soil is dyed.

XXIV.

Like burning Africa's simoom,
It bears a desolating doom,
A hydra fleet of wrongs;
In ev'ry nation, mair or less,
It leaves a mortal wilderness,
And dried and parched tongues.

XXV.

The *Ya* on Patagonia's shore,
The *Angekut* of Labrador,
Though distant as the poles,
Just differ simply in the name—
Their trade, their motives, are the same
To shackle human souls:

XXVI.

And a' the tribes that intervene,
And fight and kill, and pray, between
These north and south extremes,
Have used their power and paltry creeds,
Their nostrums, myst'ries, beuks, and beads,
For sordid, selfish aims.

XXVII.

Like Ishmael, they hae turned the han'
O' man against his brither man,
Wi' mair than brutal ire—
They've rent the sacred, social ties,
And scorch'd the safter sympathies
Wi' wild, malignant fire.

XXVIII.

Ay, kings and priests hae curst the earth,
And strangled knowledge in the birth—
They've made the warld a tomb;
Whole empires sink beneath their tread,
Heaven, frowning, darkens owre their head,
Portentous o' their doom.

XXIX.

These creatures, which the warld ca's kings,
Are surely strange, mysterious things—
'Tis said "*extremes* unite:"
In kingship, then, 'tis grown quite common,
To see 't a bairn, a man, a woman—
A queer hermaphrodite.

XXX.

And priests—ah, shocking! Christian priests,
Whase pure religion swells their breasts—
At least it swells their wames;
They've pled the helpless widow's cause,
Till church-rates, tiends, tithes, and corn-laws,
Adorn their holy names.*

XXXI.

Man, 'tis a strange preposterous thing,
To hear the creatures, priest and king,
Wha've trampled on mankin',
And wha, in forms of blood, still trace
The annals o' our injur'd race,
Pretend to right divine.

---

* Perhaps it would have a salutary effect in mitigating fanatical enthusiasm, to place a copy of the petition of the national clergy of Scotland against the repeal of the corn-laws, in juxta-position with the marvellous accounts of the Kilsyth "Revivals!"

XXXII.

O how unlike the Galilean,
The houseless, titheless Nazarene,
Whase love of libertie,
Despite of Rome's imperial thrall,
Proclaim'd that men were equal all,
By Nature destin'd free.

XXXIII.

A Right Divine! ah, impious thought,
Wi' blood and labour dearly bought,
By greedy dogs and dumb—
All are alike allied to heaven,
To all one equal light is given
To know what is to come.

XXXIV.

A Right Divine in priests and kings!!
O Mind, expand thy seraph wings,
Intelligence, advance,
And on their blood-stain'd banner broad,
Inscribe, "THE LIVING CURSE OF GOD
"FOR HUMAN IGNORANCE."

XXXV.

Besotted man wastes half his time
Deep-diving for the bliss sublime
That fills anither sphere:
This warld will surely ser' our day,
And Reason, God, and Nature say,
"Mortals, be happy here."

XXXVI.

O had the time and siller spent
On things ne'er ettled to be kent
By creatures wi' five senses,
Been spent on moral education,
How changed—how blest had been our station,
How large our recompenses.

XXXVII.

What ser's 't for us to hear o' heaven,
O' harps and sangs, and white robes given,
O' golden dykes and thrones,
To ken the cut o' angels' wings,
If here we're crush'd by priests and kings,
Young queens, and widow'd drones.

XXXVIII.

Anither warld I don't dispute,
In space some millions' whirl about,
I surely canna miss *ane;*
But first—ae step preparatory,
Before I mount anither storey,
I'd like my share o' this ane.

XXXIX.

I've liv'd these five-and-thirty years—
I've toil'd and swat, midst hopes and fears,
Whyles sinkin' and whyles soomin'—
I've borne the curse in vera deed—
I've ate the bondsman's bitter bread,
Wi' sweat and sorrow fumin'.

XL.

I canna cringe, nor fawn, nor flatter,
I'd rather earn my bread and water
Till my weak muscles broke,
Than rank wi' these ignoble apes,
Whase souls seem form'd o' bows and scrapes,
To please the muckle foke.

XLI.

I've but ae hope—it bears me up,
It aften sweeten's Labour's cup,
And lights life's irksome gloom—
I hope that Mind's expanding wings
Ere lang shall flap owre priests and kings,
A last eternal doom.*

XLII.

Syne peace, and love, and harmonie,
Shall tell at length that man is free
Frae ev'ry tyrant's claims;
The *curse* shall vanish frae the earth,
And social friendship issue forth,
Like ours, my worthy James.

---

*That mankind must be governed and instructed, is a proposition not to be disputed; but that kings and priests are inadequate to the task, is a fact which requires no other proof than a knowledge of history, which uniformly shews that in almost every country in the world, they have, under some name or other, had a trial of some thousands of years, and have failed to produce any other effect than such as I have here described.

XLIII.

Ye'll ablins think my crack owre lang,
Or say 'tis fou o' sceptic slang
Or democratic spleen—
Sic charges, now, hae little pith,
They pass for less than naething, with
Your humble friend—Macqueen.

THE WORLD,

A Poem,

IN FOUR BOOKS.

" Without or with offence to friends or foes,
I sketch your world exactly as it goes."

BYRON.

TO THE PHILANTHROPIST,

ROBERT OWEN, ESQ.

SIR,

IN inscribing a Poem to one whom I have never seen, and with whom I have never had the slightest correspondence, it would be superfluous to mention, that the Dedication is not the result of what is generally termed Friendship. There can be little harm, however, in stating, that it is not a consequence of your popularity in the world, nor of the probability of an increased circulation to my volume.—It is not offered as an acknowledgment of your superior poetical taste or talents in general literature; to these, I presume, you make but few pretensions.—And whether the sentiments embodied in the following pages bear any similarity to your sentiments on politics and religion, has never become a question with me, as regards the propriety of the Dedication; because I am satisfied that no man is responsible for his opinions on these subjects; neither do these opinions constitute any portion of moral excellence—Faith is no measure of intrinsic worth: Fenelon was a much better man than

Calvin. Many good men in all ages have entertained extravagant notions on speculative subjects, and were nevertheless the principal benefactors of society. And the Dedication of this Poem, Sir, is exclusively dictated by a conviction that you have attempted to produce, and have actually produced, a great quantity of *positive* good to your fellow-men. Like Mr. Southey, the Poet Laureat, I *admire you as a man*, and wish to testify my admiration by this trifling token of respect, which I hope you will accept and regard as an honest tribute to your ennobling views of the improvability of human nature—your extensive benevolence and general morality.

I am,

SIR,

Your sincere wellwisher,

T. MACQUEEN.

ARGUMENT.

The Introduction—Address to Nature—Her Beauties—Mysteries —Universality of Motion—Regular Changes and Indestructibility of Matter—Conflicting Theories of Human Nature—Fallacy of such—Progress of Knowledge—Obstacles to Speedy Improvement—Comparative Happiness of Ruder Ages—Illustrated by the probable Feelings and Amusements of the Hunting and Shepherd states of Society —A Scene of Shepherd Life—Endearing Associations of Early Life, and their tendency to make us Love the Past.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

HARP of the Heather, once again I fling
  My rustic fingers o'er thy trembling chords:
No little tale of luckless love I sing,
  No fulsome eulogy on kings or lords,
Nor would I deify "the strife of swords;"
  Such themes have long disgraced the minstrel's line—
A nobler song philosophy affords;
  A bolder lay, a worthier strain be mine,
  Whilst I would worship at pure Nature's glorious shrine.

II.

And O, my harp, this song shall be our last,
  With it thy master's miseries shall end;*
In all my wayward wanderings o'er the past,
  I turn'd to thee as turning to a friend—

---

* This was written under the impression that "The World" would be a posthumous publication.

Now deign once more thy sympathies to blend
With my severities on human kind,
Then all thy sounds and sorrowings suspend—
Eternal rest be ours while on the wind,
The echoes of our song shall startle many a mind.

III.

I sing the World—'tis sure a mighty theme
For one whose song scarce rises on the gale,
Nor bears in whisperings his humble name
Beyond the hills that bound his native vale;
For self-delight I sing, nor would assail
The bustling crowd with cringing courtier's smile
My rustic, unassuming notes to hail,
With bounding raptures, nor repay my toil
With glitt'ring favours, nor a gilded name the while.

IV.

I sing the World, nor stoop to ask how oft
The theme, ere now, from minstrel's lyre has sprung—
Though mighty minds, in energies aloft,
Have soar'd and search'd, ponder'd, portray'd, and sung

The mighty things of nature, and have hung
Their trophies on the wind, yet fresh and free;
As though no laurel'd bard had ever strung
His harp to sing her praise,—Nature, for me,
Spreads out her thousand charms in strange variety.

V.

The sun—the moon—the diamond-studded sky—
The flashing meteor, and the thunder's roar—
The scowling storm, that sweepeth furiously—
The foaming river and the raging shore—
The sun-burnt mountain, and the vale hung o'er
With rayless drapery—and wood and grove,
And whimpling brook, and rock, and tree, and flower—
And melody and mirth, and life and love—
Beast, bird, and insect, man, and Jupiter above,—

VI.

All, all are simply what they were of old,
When Homer strung his lyre; or if a change
Has been produced, it pleases man, whose bold,
Ambitious mind o'er nature's ample range,

For sixty centuries, has toil'd with strange
Infatuation, anxious to fling
His magic o'er her charms—not in revenge,
But just to soar—an intellectual thing,
Revising with his art the work of nature's king.

VII.

All things have been believed and disbelieved—
Ghosts, witches, goblins, miracles, and dreams,
Have all been credited—have all deceived,
And hence have generated strange extremes
Of sceptic reasoning, even till one deems
His own existence doubtful, and enwraps
Truth deep in sophistry, that dims her beams;*
Hence I advise that mitres, gowns, and caps,
Protect their dogmas dark with something like "*perhaps.*"

---

* Descartes said, "*I think*, therefore, *I am.*" Now, this was just attempting to prove a self-evident truth by an abstract argument, for it would be a thousand times more difficult to demonstrate his thinking than to prove his existence.

VIII.

It is a guardian word, I love it much,
'Tis chaste and humble, mild, and diffident;
Its sober, soothing sympathies are such,
In modes of faith, as leads it to prevent
The bitterness and burnings which have rent
Earth's peacefulness—yea, it can reconcile
Those strange mysterious conflicts, that once spent
Their rage in dragging to the fun'ral pile—
I use this word *perhaps*, though broad-faith'd bigots smile.

IX.

Perhaps the world was made—yet there are some
Who smile at this perhaps, and fain would know
Whence matter and machinery could come,
That into being this huge mass would throw:
What mass? asks Berkley, matter's greatest foe,
There is no mass—no world—no matter! Well,
A bishop's word is truth, or should be so;
I'll not dispute the point, nor can I tell
Which theorist is right—the priest or infidel.

X.

Perhaps the world was made—perhaps it is
Eternal in itself—perhaps 'tis nought:
These all are peradventures—I may miss
The real theory, though I have sought
With honest ardour, for the system fraught
With probabilities—yea, I have panted
In search of truth, but systems all are wrought
With crafty errors, and the creed I wanted
Is proven but in part—the rest I take for granted.

XI.

But I have learn'd, by dabbling in creeds,
To look with pity o'er the human race,
And sympathetic'ly their evil deeds
To evil systems I attempt to trace;
Nor do I deem it any foul disgrace
To vindicate that universal love,
That, unconfin'd by circumstance or place,
Seems like a gem in nature's frame-work wove,
Wherever reason treads or fancy seeks to rove.

XII.

Without presuming, then, that all are damn'd
Who doubt the truth of my hypothesis,
Or that because 'tis popular, 'tis cramm'd
With demonstrations clear and numberless.
I think the world was made, yet must confess
No proof exists—'tis probable conjecture,
It suits my purpose, but let no one guess
That I'am some parson or tithe-gleaning rector,
Who seeks to please a crowd with "evangelic lecture."

XIII.

'Tis said the world was wrested from the womb
Of sterile nothingness, by that dread Cause,
Whose nameless glories, bursting forth, illume
A *thousand* worlds, submissive to his laws,
And each and all, in rapturous applause,
Proclaim the might, yea, the omnipotence
Of their Original, whose being draws
Anthems of praise from all intelligence,
That soars in heaven, or sighs in dungeons deep and dense.

XIV.

And, then, 'tis said 'twas merely love of praise,
Desire to shine omnipotent, and hear
Through endless space the never-ending lays
Of gratulations echoed in his ear,
That caus'd the great Eternal Cause to rear
This vast, stupendous, sparkling, shining frame :—
Who argue thus, would doubtless make appear
That all God's labours are but future fame,
A trump of brass or gold to sound his own good name.

XV.

Perhaps the world—but whither do I roam ?
All nations have their *world-makers* in turn,
Who rear fine fabrics on their fancies' foam,
And blow them out like bubbles ; blaze or burn,
As children burn nutshells—Earth's urn
Engulphs the universe !—sublime hypothesis—
I wrestle not with phantoms—but I'd spurn
To make a world, lest I should make 't amiss—
Come on, my harp, come on, we'll take it as it is.

BOOK I.

" 'Twere well, could you permit the World to live
As the World pleases. What's the World to you?
Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk
As sweet as charity from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other?"

The Task.

NATURE, great empress of the universe!
I'd learn of thee, though thou hast been belied
And hung with titles of reproachful hue—
Capricious, fickle, moody, and so forth,
Are all in wanton humour flung at thee,
And some there are, who bear thee open hate,
Have dar'd denounce thee as a dang'rous dame:
But still I love thee—thou shalt be my guide,
My guardian spirit—my instructress—
Long have I woo'd thee, gazing o'er thy charms
In fonder adoration than the youth
Surveys the blush that tells of maiden love.

Yea, I have knelt and worshipped at thy feet
Full thirty years, with humbler, holier heart,
More seriously devotional than kneels
The wand'ring pilgrim at his good saint's shrine;
Yet feeble notions only have I glean'd
Of thy vast labours and mysterious power.
My vigilance, anxiety, and hope,
Have been but strengthen'd by the by-past toil,
And still press forward, anxious as before.
  True, I have mark'd with pure extatic joy
The common beauties of thy yearly round,
As o'er earth's ample page I gaz'd, and saw
The fields, made bleak and barren by the blast
Of scowling winter, rise again renew'd,
And spread their em'rald surface to the sun—
Thought-stirring scene—what strange, what vast
Variety is blended here! Deep in
The many-bladed grass the vi'let springs,
The lily and the humble primrose grow,
The hare-bell and the cowslip knit their heads,
And scented thyme and modest daisy, wrapt
In low obscurity, crawl on the sward,
And send their odours, like the captive's sighs
Or prayers of saints, to heaven upon the breeze.

Plants, herbs, and flowers, unnotic'd and unsung,
In thousands mix, and lend their willing aid
To form the features of the landscape fair,
And even the smallest, in its smallest leaf,
Gives evidence its maker was not man—
Or o'er the woods when turns the eager eye,
What blushing beauties crowd upon the view,—
Trees of all growths, and leaves of ev'ry form,
Exhibiting the various shades of green,
And blossoms pending from a thousand boughs
With fragrant odours fill the ambient air;
Or clust'ring fruit, by autumn's gen'rous sun
Ripe mellow'd, hing, inviting on his way
The weary traveller to a cool repast.
The feather'd minstrels warble in the grove,
The sportive fishes dance upon the stream,
Flocks bleat and gambol on the distant hills,
The noble steed steps o'er the dewy lawn,
And on the rugged precipice elate
The mountain-goat, with free and fearless stride,
Bounds with majestic mein from crag to crag,—
These are thy lesser beauties, Nature; these
Proclaim in miniature thy boundless skill,
But thou, dread power, canst manufacture worlds!

Oft have I trembled as, with anxious eye,
I gaz'd upon that limitless expanse
Of heaven's vast mirror—emblem of thy might,
Portray'd, like life, upon the deep blue sky,
Where millions of bright luminaries roll
In ceaseless revolutions, and appear
To smile upon the dwelling-place of man—
And I have watch'd and wonder'd, till the eye
With its own dimness closed, and on the mind
Flung back its functions, while distorted scenes
And wild conjectures floated on apace,
Like the disorder'd fragments of a dream—
And much I marvell'd whence these orbs had sprung,
What power sustain'd them in their proper spheres,
Who were their denizens, or what their doom!
I've even fancied, in my reverie,
That from the centre of the system, worlds,
In shape of comets, were thrown off like sparks,
And flew in rapid motion through the void,
Cooling and thick'ning their own atmospheres,
Which check'd in time their vagabond career:
Yea, I have held, in this delusive dream,
Sweet converse with the intellectual giants
Whom fancy had made lords of other orbs,

And in their knowledge I have felt true bliss,
Till some new spark, thrown sideling from the sun
With strange velocity, came posting on,
Blazing and hissing with a fiery sound—
It knock'd our Saturn to a thousand shreds,
And left but dark, confus'd unconsciousness;
Then I have started, as from troubled sleep,
And, like the child tired in the fruitless chace
Of butterflies or corncreaks, sat me down
To moralise upon my own defeat,
And I have cursed the ignorance and pride
That thus would tempt me from my proper sphere
To search thy great arcana, while at hand
A thousand useful things were unexplor'd.
I saw thy orbs in motion—saw them swing
Their endless revolutions through the void,
But saw no more, and motion could be seen
More clearly and more varied on the earth.—
All matter moves—or organis'd or dead,
No atom is at rest. The mighty deep,
In everlasting motion, ebbs and flows,
Howls, grumbles, heaves, and haply, in her wrath,
Entombs whole continents, while from her womb
New empires issue—islands rise and fall

Like bubbles on her foam, and ev'ry beach,
Strew'd with the wrecks of former flood-tides, tell
How slow, how gradual, her creative power.—
All matter moves—Throughout th' eternal space
Some spirit of activity resides,
Some principle of life, some element,
Electric fluid—fire—magnetic power,
Or something man perhaps neglects to name,
Pervades all matter, and forbids its rest,
From where the dull, dead, shapeless clod of earth
Moulders to dust, or crawls in the poor worm,
To where it soars, and in its bolder sphere
Dreams in the dog, or reasons in the man.
The mountain moves—even in its inmost pore
New crystals form, new combinations rise,
New stratas grow and ripen, and its soil,
With furze and heath-bell clad, just lives and dies
In rotatory motion—ev'n the rock
Of granite hanging on its rugged brow,
Tho' old as ages or the mountain's self,
Now sweats and crumbles, moving to decay.
Hills turn to vallies, vallies rise to hills,
And ev'ry peak in ev'ry strata shews
The workmanship of motion and of time.

The ocean flings her spray up through the clouds,
The clouds in turn refresh the parched earth;
Earth with her streams replenishes the sea,
And thus the everlasting river flows,
And in her constant action wears away,
By almost imperceptible degrees,
Whole mountains to the bosom of the deep,
Till the alluvial earth at length appears
Above the glassy surface as new lands.
Vesuvius belshes forth her molten fire,
The Amazon rolls down her ocean floods—
Both are but agents of the moving power
To alter, analyse, and recombine,
But cannot make one atom nor destroy.
O'er Herculaneum's ashes verdure springs,
And great Maranon rears her thousand isles—
No particle is lost.—This little globe,
With all its changes and convulsions dire,
Weighs not one scruple more or less
Than what it weigh'd ten million ages since.*

* Lest the rays of the sun or falling meteors may have had some effect upon the weight of this planet, it is safer to extend this assertion to matter in general.

Matter moves on, and shifts its forms and place,
Acts on itself, and moulders and revives,
Assumes new combinations—lives and dies,
And dead or living is of equal weight.
More living things have walk'd, crawl'd, flown, or swim'd
On ocean, earth, and air, than would outweigh
The varied elements on which they liv'd;
More grain, more trees, more roots, and herbs, and flowers,
Have ripen'd and decay'd upon the earth,
Than would poise up the scale that held the world,
And yet the world is weighty as before.
  Rocks crumble into dust, dust feeds the food—
Food feeds all living things, and all life dies
And vegetates anew, and fosters life—
Beasts eat each other: gormandizing man
Eats beasts, and soon is eaten by the worm;
And thus all matter moves.—That particle
Which in a Nero burn'd the imperial Rome,
May, in a wolf, long since, have sucked blood,
And that same atom which in mild Rosseau
Created worlds to please his generous soul,
May in some shepherd's dog at present dream!
This may be galling to our apish pride,
Yet may be true—no particle is lost:

There is not in this feeble frame of mine
One atom but may have, for aught I know,
Existed five, or fifty thousand years,
And may successively have grown and bloom'd,
Liv'd, walk'd, swim'd, flown, and dream'd, and thought,
in turns,
Through all that vegetates and all that lives!
And I shall die—and nothing shall be lost—
O'er my own grave my ashes shall revive,
And this same brain which loves not kings and queens,
May yet be verdure in some lonely spot
To feed the lamb where Monarchy shall dine:
And this is Nature's law; Oh, would that man
Had lov'd and learn'd it in his younger years,
It sure had sav'd him many a bitter pang.
But what is Man? This is a mystery, too,
Darken'd by definition, and perplex'd
With theories absurd and much at war—
I know there are who think, how harsh the thought,
And yet it is the common creed, that man
Is but a worm, an insect, grovelling low,
Encrusted in the filth of wickedness,
A wretch—a villain of the deepest dye,
A demon scowling in the face of heav'n,

And waging war with ev'ry thing that's good!
I wish men were consistent in their creeds.
Methinks 'tis strange—perhaps 'tis scarcely true—
That He, th' Eternal Spirit, should create
A system so stupendous as our world,
So wonderful—so fair—diversified
With all the grand and gay of hill and dale,
Of river, lake, and wood, all verdant, all
Replete with beasts, birds, fishes, and strange things,
That live and breath in diff'rent spheres, and form
That vast infinitude of Life which shuns
All computation and displays, in shape,
And size, and nature (all attain their end),
A thousand thousand strange varieties!
To say that He who form'd this mighty mass,
And form'd it right, and beautiful, and good,
And lit it with the golden lamps of heav'n,
And girt it with the girdle of the deep
Blue ocean, wonderful abyss of life!
Great emblem of his own infinity—
To say that He should make, *or strive to make,*
A being worthy to possess the whole,
And only make a worm—a worthless thing—
A reptile poisoning, like the Upas tree,

All fairer growth where'er his venom comes—
A blot on all creation, yet possess'd
Of power omnipotent, that can destroy
The peace and harmony of God's design,
And, rising in rebellion, dares to shake
The adamantine walls that circle heav'n!
" Perish such thoughts!" the Free-will champion cries,
" This straw-built theory, which reason spurns;
Man was, and is, the fairest, finest gem
That sparkles in the mighty maze of things,
Reflecting brightness over all the scene,
Like diamond on the rugged mountain's brow,
Or crystal lake within the woody vale,
The noblest feature on the face of time,
And worthy to be call'd the work of God.
" I grant that man did err, and erring, fell
From that primeval purity, that else
Had made him intimate with things of heav'n;
I grant that still he errs, and suffers pain,
Not that he needs must err—he chooses this—
His nature, bound in Nature's stubborn law,
Prescribes his duty and his happiness,
Yet leaves him liberty to disobey
And pluck the fruit from the forbidden tree;

But pain is of necessity—for why?
For sin and sorrow are so closely link'd,
Who drinks the sin shall sip the sorrow too,
And generous Nature, in her love, decrees
That sorrow's bitter cup, remorse and shame,
Pain and disease, should be the wholesome means
To teach the violator to obey.
But man, we say, is fallible—'tis true,
Wer't otherwise he needs would be a god;
Nor if he falls beneath necessity,
Is he a man, but just a mere machine,
And not amenable to any law
More than the shadow driven by the sun,
Or wheel propell'd by irresistive power—
Man was not, is not tied to good, nor prone,
By stern necessity, to follow ill;
He has a choice, a liberty, a power,
Unsubjugated by the paltry sway
Of strongest motive or dull circumstance,
Which used aright would make him half a god,
To trample under foot base appetites,
And, soaring o'er all selfish interests, rise
Superior to the trammels of his tribe—
But, ah! he errs, and to his own disgrace,

And to diseased opinion, bluntly gives
His signature, declaring to the world
He loves and glories in the name of wretch."
Such are the theories which man, vain man,
Spins out and preaches, to mislead himself:
I once lov'd theories—yea, I have mus'd
And hung delighted o'er the pleasing dreams
Which poets and philosophers have dreamt,
Of brighter days that grac'd our infant race,
And I have revel'd in blest Eden's bowers,
And pluck'd the rose that bloom'd without a thorn,
Felt joy unmingled with a pang of grief,
Drunk pleasure ere dull pain created was,
And liv'd in fancy what I read in song:
These visions all are gone—experience sage
Has taught me how to learn and think from facts.
The savage prowling on Van Dieman's shore,
Ere Christian rage for wealth had spilt his blood
And buried all his race in one wide grave,
Was just a savage, nor enjoy'd more bliss
From his raw morsel and unlorded soil,
Than does our priest-rid Briton with his kings.
From knowledge only happiness can flow,
And knowledge is the progeny of time,

Rear'd in all ages and in ev'ry land,
Perpetuating still its kind, and still
Attracting to one centre all its parts.
With strange adhesiveness it rolls along
From ev'ry corner of remotest days,
Descending down from sire to son enlarg'd,
From age to age corrected and revis'd,
Till in one volume, pond'rous and immense,
All truths are met, and swamp in one bright blaze
The errors and the griefs of all mankind.
Thus Egypt's science rose renew'd in Greece,
Thence borne to Rome amid new glories shone,
And rolling o'er the regions of the North
Through Vandals and Barbarians, meets again,
And in our own lov'd isle flings forth her power
In iron roads and chariots wing'd with fire.
Thus knowledge wends her way, and in her flight
Diffuses happiness, or more or less
Proportion'd to the freedom of her wings.
Kings, priests, and taxes, the repulsive force,
Impede her progress; but perhaps these are
The necessary trammels to her speed,
And die whene'er utility demands.—
But when—ah! when shall Brama's sons arise,

And burst the fetters of their cursed castes?
Or the New-Hollander at length arrive
At that same point where Brama's children stand?
The sun upon the dial-plate of time
Goes round and round, and finds them still the same,
And century on century rolls by,
And scarcely indicates the point of change!
What ages, then, would Egypt's sons require
To give to Science ev'n her rudest form,
Or what a maze of years would needs elapse
Ere Britain broke th' imperial yoke of Baal!
To conquer fire—to find the iron ore,
Were greater acts, demanding greater time,
Than all the model-engines of a Watt;
Yet the New-Hollander has conquer'd fire,
And scarcely rises to the thinking scale.
O what immense, unmeasured epochs lie
Between the fireless savage, shiv'ring chill
In wintry night, beneath the blasted tree,
Naked and hungry, and the learned judge,
Girt with his golden chain, and stretch'd at ease,
As with the lightning's speed he 's hurried on
With steed of steam upon his iron road!
The mind perceives infinity of years

Recoils from calculation, and concludes
That all is myst'ry, and is partly pleas'd
That poets' tales of better days are false.
  And yet, methinks perhaps there was a time
Ere thrones were built or priestly pulpits made,
When man did worship God each for himself,
When doctrines of degen'racy were young,
Nor needed purchas'd prayers—a middle time—
A half-way house between the two extremes
Of shirtless savage and the gold-robed king,
Where humble happiness at times sojourn'd.
  Perhaps the shepherd of remoter days
On alpine clifts of healthy Scotia's hills,
With crook and plaid, and friendly well-taught dog,
Knew more of earth's true blessedness than all
The gorgeous learning of this wondrous age.
  Perchance his ignorance might breed him woe,
For ignorance is not allied to bliss,
And yet it is the patrimonial right—
The first inheritance of man's first-born—
Fair Science, Nature's only index, ne'er
To him had spread her mind-creating page,
But left him, like the Grecian's cyclops blind,
To grope his way to intellectual light.

What marvel, then, if his untutor'd mind,
In wild imaginings, sought to explain
Th' apparent mysteries of Nature's laws?
What if the dreadful storm that wreck'd the plain,
And roar'd in fury through the rocky hills,
Till mountain streams, commingling to a flood,
Swept half his crops and flocks to ruin's gulph,
Was deemed the living ire of Nature's God!
Who, far away beyond the realms of space,
Sat sovereign on a throne of burnish'd gold,
In form of man, old, ven'rable, and gray,
Eccentric and capricious as a child,
Sway'd, pleas'd, or anger'd by the paltry deeds
Of little engines which himself had made,
Whose voice, when threat'ning, in hoarse thunders spoke,
Or in the smiling sunshine promis'd peace,
Or who to-day with blest abundance crown'd
The peopled earth, and ere to-morrow pass'd,
Griev'd with men's scantiness of praise,
Destroy'd the plenty in his wounded pride.

What though this shepherd of primeval times
Knew nought of other globes, save this small world,
And thought the countless suns, and moons, and stars,
That wander on eternally through space,

Were only little glimmering diamonds stuck
On azure ground, for the exclusive end
Of lighting shepherds 'mong their rugged hills!
True, these crude notions haply marr'd his bliss,
And made him shrink from mere ideal ills,
Yet, in the absence of all better guides,
Propell'd him onward in fair virtue's paths,
A frugal, honest, unsuspecting swain,
Who knew no science, and who woo'd no guile.
I love to muse on those unvarnished times
When dignities and titles were unknown,
When Prince, Duke, Earl, Priest, Lord, and Servant, were
Things not detested as a social curse—
I mean the time ere these distinctions rose—
The time of simple ignorance in all—
The time, however rude, when things in life,
And in religion too, were what they seem'd,
When man, a hero of the chase, was train'd
To rein and ride the fiery hunter steed,
To sling the quiver, and to bend the bow,
To skim the whirling pool with baited hook,
To scale the cliff, and wrench the mountain goat
From eagle's talons fasten'd in his breast,

To bell the falcon, and direct his flight
To where the covey flutter'd through the air,
And when in dull or disappointed mood,
To fill a vacant hour and soothe the soul,
He flung his fingers o'er the harp, and sung
Some mournful ballad of departed years:
His wants were few, and suited to his means,
His creed and laws were simple as his state,
Involving nought save what he understood;
'Twas nature's law, and her religion too,
And needed no expounder—'twas but this,
"That *all* possessed one equal common right
To earth and all the good things it bestow'd,
For all alike were citizens of earth,
And earth and all its fulness were the Lord's."
I love to muse upon a better time,
When life and property were more secure,
When honesty was deemed the highest goal,
The pole-star of ambition, whence aspir'd
The man solicitous of earthly fame:
The shepherd's age of love, and peace, and ease,
When each man own'd his special little flock,
His plot of ground, which till'd as pastime, lent

Its little store to glad his cottage hearth,
When cold, bleak winter from the north set in.
Methinks I see, in the dim-visioned past,
A lovely picture of the shepherd's life;
And if I envied ought of days gone by,
I'd grudge him of his rural happiness,
When on the mountain's sunny side reclin'd
He watch'd his woolly flocks, that stroll'd and brows'd
In wanton liberty, in summer months,
Upon the ferny herbage, coarse and lank,
Or cropt with cautious care the scanty leaves
From off the prickly shrubs that freely sprung,
Unurg'd by culture, from the crevic'd rock;
Or when the sun had risen in his might,
He watch'd them, led by instinct to the shade,
And frolic gaily round the oaken tree,
While the lone bleat of some poor wand'rer, borne
From the bold precipice or lofty rock
Whereon it stood imprison'd, swim'd along
In mournful cadence on the gentle breeze.
Down, headlong down the chasm leapt the wild stream,
Which far o'er many a rude cascade was thrown,
Foaming and dashing to the mountain's base
To join the river hurrying down the vale,

Whose hoarse roar in the distance rose again
In hoarse reboundings from the echoing hills.
The mountain ash, with creeping ivy clasp'd,
Its mellow'd crest rear'd o'er the deep ravine,
And ting'd the surface of the eddying pool,
Which with the shadow of its berries red
Glow'd like a purple mirror, or the beams
Of some bronze cloud on ev'ning's tranquil sea:
The plover whistled on his forward course,
The lark hung motionless far up in air,
The magpie chatter'd on the fairy thorn,
The little wren chirp'd in its mossy nest,
And in the glen below the blackbird's notes
Were rising to a cheerful melody.
Beyond the river rose the chequer'd hills
Of verdant spots, and rocks, and barren heath,
With here and there a hoary hermit thorn,
Whose aged trunk of bud and rind was reft
By the continual rubbings of the flock,
And on the bright green patches might be seen
A solitary pair of shrubby oaks
Or ashes, stinted in their growth, which mark'd
The meagre ruins, scarce discernible,
Of ancient farm-stead, or lone peasant's cot:

The neighbouring flocks in little groups were spread
O'er the unequal surface of the hills,
And, seen at distance, closely cluster'd, seem'd
Like those white fleecy clouds that roll or hang
Upon the breast of summer's azure sky.
Methinks I see the shepherd swain entranc'd
In the deep dream of nature's loveliness,
Till waken'd by a voice mellifluous,
That with the gen'ral symphony pour'd forth
Its witching tones in melting, measur'd strains.
It was the voice, the sweet, the well-known voice
Of his fair shepherdess, who stroll'd alone
Far down the glen, and weening none was nigh,
With tender pathos lilted notes of love.
Electric thrillings shook the shepherd's soul,
He seized his pipe, and, trembling, full of hope,
His plaintive numbers usher'd to the breeze,
Then rushing through the brushwood, soon enclos'd
The willing virgin in love's blest embrace.—
Yea, this was love—untainted, harmless love,
The soul's pure ardour thrilling through the veins,
The language of the heart, unaw'd by rule,
The sentiment of feeling and young life,
Th' unutter'd throb of nature's naked mind

Flung forth in nature's own indulgent lap.
This was, if e'er an age of bliss prevail'd,
The golden age of peace—no noise of war,
No boist'rous revelry nor lewdness liv'd,
No jarring strife nor hostile feeling reign'd,
But all was blent in one unbroken calm,
And not a symptom of ill-will appear'd,
Save where the treach'rous fox, by hunger strain'd,
Decoy'd and feasted on the straggling lamb,
Or the wild hawk, while clinging to the rock
To feed her young, like arrow darted down,
And drunk the life-blood of the singing thrush.
All else was peace—a very world of love,
And honesty, and ignorance, and ease.
Where'er the eye could turn or trace, was seen
Nought save the workings of benignant power,
Nor did man live unconscious of the proof
That Nature lov'd him with a bounteous love,
For though he view'd the tempest and the flood,
The losses, crosses, accidents, and pains,
Which happen'd to himself, or friends, or flocks,
As "*judgments*" carv'd to punish special crimes,
Yet ev'ry charm that hung on Nature's face,
And ev'ry sound that rose from Nature's harp,

Ev'n the shrill warblings of the red-breast's song,
Awoke some secret chord which swell'd and beat
In unison, and shar'd the joy diffus'd,
And he believed (for Faith had being then)
That ev'ry secret and responsive chord,
And ev'ry sense and feeling thus regal'd,
Were gifts of heaven, design'd alone to grasp
The varied happiness thus amply shed
O'er all creation's range, and lead the heart,
With blessings fill'd, with gratitude inspir'd,
Up through the mighty maze of joys bequeathed
To one, the giver and the Lord of all.

Oft, oft in grief or deep misfortune's hour,
The eye of supplication gaz'd intent,
Not on the sparkling orbs—these were too small,
But on the azure vault, and simply deem'd
Th' infinite God had there a local home;
And oft the heart, unburthen'd of its prayer,
Has felt true peace and consolation's balm—
For man did worship God, not with that cold,
Expensive, formal, business-like routine
Of modern times, where silk and silver make
At least one half of all that's seen or thought,
Or where, perhaps, some farmer's lazy son,

Tir'd of the plough, and push'd, by dint of pelf,
Through learning's dizzy maze, at length sits down,
A pond'rous, useless load on the gall'd back
Of simple Industry, and in return
For five times fifty pounds a-year, glides forth
Each Sabbath at mid-day, and tells a tale—
A bare-worn tale, of haply two hours' length,
A real transcript of his own poor brain,
Remarkable for nought save want of thought;
Or if perchance his intellect permit,
He'll dun the ears and stupify the minds
Of more than half his little, patient flock,
With college jargon, as obscure to them
As is the point he struggles to define.
I hate these knotty points—I hate these things
Call'd *party principles*—these are the tools
With which designing knaves in church and state
For ages past have gull'd the simple world,
And bubbled honest men of half their wealth.
I have transgress'd—I've wander'd from my theme,
And but anticipate my future song.
I love the age of Nature ere the world
Was bent and twisted by capricious rules,
Ere what is hight *refinement* had destroy'd

The very essence of the thing it mends.
I love the moorland, with its red heath-bells,
Emblem of beauty, in its earliest dawn,
Unconquer'd and untam'd by selfish art,
It lives in its own likeness, and bequeaths
A genuine picture of primeval peace.
I love the harp of other days; its tones
Are full of fervour—its impassion'd lay
Comes quiv'ring like an echo from the past,
And tells what pathos ruder times could feel.
I love pure honesty, yet cannot smile
On legal acts for making people just;
Nor can I brook that coldrife sympathy
Which works by system or a nation's law.
I love the native loveliness of love
Uncheck'd by fashion's cold and chilling breath,
Yea, dearer far to me the milkmaid's smile
Than all the etiquette of gentler dames.
I love the rural courtship—yes, the scene
Is graven deep on mem'ry's purest page—
That scene—that holy scene of singing birds,
And hawthorn glades, and silvery moonlit eves,
And flowery banks and whimpling limpid streams,
And beating hearts, and sighs, and wistful looks,

Embraces, kisses, promises, and vows,
In all the grandeur of simplicity.
I love to see the maiden of fifteen,
With braided hair and cheek of rosy hue,
Who laughs and sings as loudly in the fields,
As though false female modesty were dead;
In her young breast no rankling venom lurks,
No doubtful musings nor suspicions drear,
No jealous mildews gather on the heart
To raise a morbid loathing of the world,
But all is life, and jollity, and love,
And fond confidings and warm sympathies.
In her light step and lively mirth is seen
A thing of laughing hope and thoughtless joy,
The living portrait of a guiltless mind.
I love to see young, healthy children play
And gambol gaily on the daisied green—
They lend new vigour to declining years,
And fling a sort of witch'ry o'er the soul;—
What fond associations marshall'd rise
From the dull slumbers of sepulcher'd times,
And flit o'er memory in a fitful chace,
Like dancing lights upon the northern sky.
The mightiest mind forgets its bolder thoughts,

Foregoes, a while, its speculations grand,
Bends half-enchanted o'er the urchins' sport,
And feels itself envelop'd in the maze
Of childhood's harmless and endearing joys.
The ghosts of early innocence spring forth,
The fragments of the sunny days of life;
Remembrance of whate'er we feel or know
Of that delusive phantom, happiness,
In all their former fascinating charms,
Glide by in form of ruddy-cheeked boys,
And mother's fond and flattering caress,
Indulgent sire and little sisters bland,
And brothers who were partners of the bliss,
And shared in all the little childish toils
Of tops, balls, marbles, paper-boats, and kites,
Which all have pass'd away—the very peers
Who on the same lap suck'd the same kind breast,
Are parted to the varied regions of the globe,
Or haply slumber in unmarked graves,
And only rise with other childhood scenes,
To make us wish for retrogressive time.
Yea, ev'n the sage who prides him in his lore,
And would not, were it possible, exchange
The riches of his mind for all the wealth

Of all the nations, yet would barter all
For certain portions of his boyish days,
And, spite of all his wisdom, scarce forbears
To wish himself a second time a child.
  This is the secret why we love the past,
These are the associations whence arise
Our notions of a former golden time—
'Tis here we revel in primeval bliss,
Painting the beauties of a rural life,
And, in the spirit of invidious spleen,
Denounce the age—the wondrous age of Wheels.

THE ARGUMENT.

The City—its general Characteristics—Arrival of Stage Coaches—the Porter—the Chariot—Students—Public Market—the Love of Wealth—its Universal Prevalence destructive of Benevolent Sympathy—the Coalman—the Poor Blind Man—the Philanthropist—the Justice—the Culprit—the Dinner Hour—Factory Children—Political Meeting—Drunken Politicians—Evil Tendency of Drunkenness—Patronised by Government—Dreadful Influence of the Love of Wealth—the Author's Sympathy with the Multitude—Salutary Admonitions to Political Governors—Sabbath in the City—Church-going Population—the City Wench—Prevalence of Disease and Death arises from Violations of the Natural Laws—the Village Pestilence—what is Life?—an Effect of Organization—Exemplified in several instances—the Love of Life inherent in all Living Beings—numerous Examples—the Murdered Lamb—the Dying Man—Love of Life a sufficient Preventative of Suicide—this Truth Illustrated by a Picture of real Misery—slight Intimation of the Nature of the succeeding Book.

BOOK II.

" If to the city sped, what waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share,
To see ten thousand baneful arts combin'd
To pamper luxury and thin mankind,
To see each joy the sons of pleasure know
Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe."

GOLDSMITH.

" GOD made the country, and man made the town,"
So wrote the pious Cowper, who wrote " Truth,"
Hence this sage sentiment is haply true.
Look where yon dark cloud hovers in mid-air,
And taints the rays of heaven with stench and smoke,
Till the tall spires, encrusted deep in gloom,
Seem sicken'd with an atmosphere impure.
There stands the city, populous and dense,
The monstrous, moving, and promiscuous mass
Of all that's evil and of all that's good.
There vice and virtue, ignorance and pride,
Learning, humility, justice, and gross fraud,
Stern avarice and sympathy benign,
Dwell with each other 'neath one common roof;

And there, too, wealth and deepest misery
Rush side by side, like two twin-sister streams,
Meet, mix, and mingle, and yet, strange to tell,
Break not each other's surface, but remain,
Like oil and water pour'd in the same glass,
Distinctly separate as they ne'er had met.
See o'er her thousand streets one living crowd
Thronging and jostling, hurrying to and fro,
In unremitting bustle pressing on.
Here coach meets coach, with wond'ring travellers fill'd
From distant cities or remoter towns,
All bent on errands varied more or less,
And all with varied ardour push along:
Horns blow—bells ring—postboys and coachmen run,
And supple waiters bow, with "What's your will?"
Here, too, approaches swarthy, unwash'd Ned,
With rope around his neck, and on his breast
The brazen badge, whereon is written *Slave*,
Knocks his rough visage through the gath'ring crowd,
And, in hoarse, weather beaten voice, bawls out,
"D'ye want a porter, sir?" then kneels him down
Like camel with his rider, and receives
The pond'rous luggage trunk, and jogs away.
The gilded chariot next comes rattling on,

With richly harness'd steeds and trappings gay,
Postilions, pages, footmen, and the host
Of all that makes a gorgeous display,
And idle crowds gape wonder—serfs look big,
And toss their livery as though they lived
On admiration, or could urge a claim
As benefactors of the common herd,
When all this show—this vain parade, but bears
Some wrinkled Duchess or some pewling Miss,
To dance or dine at Duke Do-nothing's ball.
There up that rising street, whose buildings rude,
Irregular, and grim, depict the taste
Of ruder bygone years, what little bands
Of youngsters, uniform in scarlet cloaks,
The badges of yon gloomy, reverend dome,
Trip hurriedly along, loath to incur
The frown of surly pedagogue, who chides
Delays or violations of his laws.
See how the youth, each with his classic task,
Press onward, anxious to learn the mode
Of living sumptuous on the poor man's toil;
For learning here flows down a thousand streams,
To fatten idleness and feed the mind,

And, like the birthright of the patriarch's son,
Is sometimes barter'd for a meagre meal.
The anxious eye, astonish'd, now turns round,
And gazes o'er the city's sovereign court,
The public mart—the thoroughfare of wealth,
The great arena of commercial strife.
What ample treasures, temptingly expos'd,
Arrest the wonder, and the wish of all!
Food, clothing, finery of ev'ry grade,
Gold, silver, trinkets, books, and ornaments,
In ev'ry window teem, as though the world
Contain'd no want, nor held a single pang
Of poverty or grief.—Wealth is the mark,
The rage, the curse, the watch-word of the age:
Religion, friendship, happiness, and love,
Honour, and liberty, yea, life itself,
Have all been immolated on the shrine
Of that huge Hebrew idol, *molten gold*,
Which has secured more worshippers devote,
Than all the countless deities of man.
"Gold may be bought too dearly," and perchance
The produce of Peruvian mines have cost
More than an equal weight of human life,

And still men grasp, and glory in the curse,
The blood-bought curse of all that's truly good.
O'er the smooth pavement one continuous crowd
Pass and repass with unabated zeal,
On countless errands, tending to one end,
Urg'd by one motive—Wealth, bewitching Wealth;
This is th' exclusive object of the whole,
Which, like the lean kine in the Jewish dream,
Eats up all feelings higher than itself.
The ragged boor, of black, unseemly port,
Rings his small bell behind his donkey's cart,
And roars out "*coals*," or "*cabbages*," or "*sand*,"
Yet scarce can gather wherewithal to live:
The "poor blind man" solicits partial aid
From "fellow Christians," who hurry on
As heedlessly as though themselves were blind:
The shop, the office, counting-house, or bank,
Wareroom or factory, market or exchange,
Engross the feelings of all passers by,
All float along in haste, and all alike
Seem callous to all other things than *trade*,
Save one, and he comes on at sloven pace,
Stalking incurious through the rustling throng,
He seems without an aim—proud fashion's glare,

And all her tempting toys, are pass'd unseen;
Yet is his look not vacant—thought is there:
Deep thought is graven on his wrinkled brow,
But in his gait, apparent want of aim
Says he has business nowhere to perform.
Through the dense multitude he moves unknown—
On this side and on that men meet with friends,
Change salutations, nods, and shakes of hands,
But none knows him—poor, solitary man,
No one salutes him.—The lone solitude
Of wildest desert wears no sterner gloom
Than wears the tumult of the town for him—
He is no *business man*—his pace is slow.
Why roams he here? Seeks he some wander'd friend?
But lo! he halts—he bows a willing ear,
Some one salutes him now—the "poor blind man,"
Who cried for hours in vain, at length finds one
To list attentively his plaintive tale,
One whose munificence is free to all,
And whose whole wand'rings only furnish scope
For ample alms and boundless sympathy:—
Again he stops—a creature crawls along,
Dragging his limbs all powerless, through the crowd
That scarce has charity to tread aside.

The good man sees him with a brother's eye,
Bestows his bounty with a glowing heart,
Sighs, shakes his head, and muttering "Alas,"
Through the live desert wends his cheerless way.
On this side see the bellied *Justice* come,
With silver spectacles and golden chain—
He walks, or rather rolls, in affluence.
He's for the court, that creature of dark crime,
To measure justice by a standard rule,
As men with legal yard-wands measure cloth:
On that side see the squalid, filthy wretch,
Born in depravity's worst cell, and fed
Or suckled in the lap of guilt and crime,
For whom "refin'd society" provides
A dungeon or a halter, and no more!
Look how he's dragged along by these rude serfs,
Who wear the city's livery and garb.
He, too, is for the court, there to receive
A chain—an iron chain, which Justice gives,
To teach him honesty and moral law!
The clock strikes two—mark how the city moves—
Thousands on thousands issue nimbly forth.
The workshops, factories, and all the haunts
Of toil and commerce, pour their mix'd contents

Promiscuous on the streets—all lanes and squares,
And courts and alleys, move, one sheet of life—
All eager for their meal, and anxious all
To make the most of Liberty's short hour.
All sexes, ages, shapes, and shades that live
In human character, are mingled here:
And many a tatter'd coat and visage pale,
And sickly eye and blanched lip, is seen;
And many a damsel with but hectic bloom,
And flannel necklace round a graceful neck,
Who coughs and shivers in the gentlest breeze,
And who, if living on Arcadia's plain,
Had been an angel in Anacreon's song.
Mark how these little ragged urchins swarm
In little groups, and crouching as they run
With hands in pockets, scarcely stop to gaze,
Save where one hardier than his peers stoops down
To see the cork swim in the common sewer.
Poor hapless things! they bear a bitter doom—
Exil'd from nature's purifying gale,
From sports and pleasures of a rural life,
From all the pastime that makes childhood sweet,
Ev'n schoolboys' happiness must be denied:
Day after day of each successive year,

Doom'd but to hear the everlasting click
Of spinning jenny or an engine's clank.
Spring's animating essence, bearing joy,
And life, and vigour to all human things—
The boundless beauties of a summer world,
In rosy richness scattering delight—
The sultry autumn, with his mellow'd stores—
And haggard winter, in her storms sublime,—
To these poor children bring no varied joy:
Monotony in all her dulness reigns.
Nought, nought of change beguiles their irksome hours,
Save the eternal fritter of the wheels
That night and morn, and morn and night, through life,
Revolve a pace but to revolve again:—
And this is wealth—commercial, wallowing wealth!
The splendour of the city—all that's known
Of national prosperity and power,
Springs, lives, and prospers on these children's curse.
Hark! music flings her thrilling tones abroad—
The tumult deepens—banners are unfurl'd!
The dense crowd rushes with appalling force—
Tremendous pressure hurries all along,
And on the spacious green crowd after crowd
Pours out her het'rogeneous contents—

All pathways swarm, and ev'ry second brings
Amazing increase to the gen'ral throng
Which o'er the common stretches far and wide,
Like one great undulating sea of life—
Ten thousand voices mingle, and a sound
From ev'ry quarter swells the trembling buzz,
Which rises to a far stretch'd murmur deep,
Hoarse, indistinct, confus'd—a noisy void,
Like echo ringing in a land of hills,
Or rustling breeze among the wither'd leaves,
Or hum of bees—or like the strange mix'd sound
Of many waters.—All is stir, for lo!
Upon the elevated stage appears
The patriot orator—the demagogue—
The man in whom the millions put their trust.
Now crushing, jostling, squeezing on all sides,
Bruising of heels, and spoiling shapes of hats,
Beget hard looks, hard words, and some hard blows,
Till, jamm'd like wedge-work, all worse feelings sink
In greeting acclamations of applause.
The orator holds forth—his glowing tongue
Portrays as large as life, or rather more,
The prodigal expenses of the State,
The harshness and injustice of her laws;

The profligacy, uselessness, and weight
Of that huge monster, Noble Idleness;
The toils and hardships of the lab'ring poor,
Their thraldom, degradation, and disgrace,
Their earnings, burthens, groanings, and slow deaths,
Their worth, their wisdom, their appalling might,
Which, marshall'd wisely, may redeem themselves,
And ought, and will, in terrible array,
Burst forth to hurl the Oppressor from his throne,
And with a fiery finger write his doom
In flaming letters on the midnight sky!
Blood foams—brains quiver—hearts and nerves grow strong—
Eyes gleam with vengeance—even the callous teeth
Gnash in defiance—ev'ry passion, fraught
With dire destruction, wakens into life,
And in one wild and dreadful yell breaks forth!
The orator has spent his rage—his voice
Floats hoarsely in the distance, and is lost
In loud huzzas from such as cannot hear.
Again the tumult swells, and cloven tongues
Rise in the babel of a wavy noise;
Again the music rings, and the dense crowd,
Loosed from its bondage, parts in lesser bands,

And bending to the city, moves along :—
Inns, taverns, tap-rooms, dram-shops, and hotels,
Soon overflow with strange, loquacious guests,
Blacksmiths and barbers, and the hosts who live
By looms and spindles, all transform'd anon
To soldiers, heroes, senators, and kings,
And soon, like other rulers of the world,
Grow fools and madmen—talk of nought but war,
And death and vengeance—all good feeling dies
In wine or whiskey, till the blood boils hot,
Ev'n at the temp'rature where heroes fight.
Threats, banters, insults, next fly forth, and then
Is valour tried upon each other's heads.
Chairs, tables, forms, and glasses overturn'd,
And sturdy blows, and hard knock-downs, and groans,
And oaths, and murder-cries, are wildly blent
In one appalling scene of ruin gaunt,
Till wounded, wearied, penniless, and drunk,
The champions, thrown like rubbish to the street,
In darkness stagger to their own poor homes,
And on their wives vent their remaining wrath,*

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* This is certainly not a genuine picture of the conduct of the whole working population. It is far from the character of the great

Whose silent suff'rings haply make them loath
And inly curse political reform!—
There is a strange perversity in man,
Which not the holiest ties have power to bind.
Ev'n love of woman, life, and progeny,
Are feeble bonds—but ah! in rending these,
He to true bondage adds another chain.
Church, court, camp, cabinet, and rank and wealth,
And even Learning, with her thousand schools,
Are but the legal, complicated means
Of binding thraldom on the toiling mob.
Yea riches, genius, talent, all combine,
In anxious, unremitting, mental toil,
Devising how the monstrous multitude
May best transmit its likeness to its sons—
The castes of Brama are in ev'ry clime
A leading item in the civil code,
And in "hereditary rights" the mob
To endless ignorance must be entail'd.
The dram-shop and the church act as the power—

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majority; but it is a real transcript of the conduct of such a number, as will sufficiently retard every amelioration of the working man's condition, till such times as these errors are entirely subdued.

The moving power, or wond'rous state machine,
By which gross ignorance, with all her woes,
Of famine, bondage, misery, and death,
Are manufactur'd for the thoughtless crowd,
And still the crowd, impatient for the bait,
Anticipates the tyrant's worst decree,
Gapes, gulps, and swallows ere the draught's distill'd,
And for the church makes sacrifice of life,
And for the dram-shop starves his helpless young!
The busy artisan, whose daily task
Scarce for his offspring furnishes due food,
Looks forward, and in all futurity
Sees nought but hardships and incessant toil,
And losing courage, when of greatest use,
Because the State's imperial behest
From ev'ry shilling earn'd must drain a groat,
Takes to the tavern, and quite prodigal
Of curses on taxation, *gives* the State,
Poor, gen'rous fool! his two remaining groats!
  There is a demon in the love of wealth,
Which no power sacred, social, civil, just,
In art or nature, wholly can subdue:
A deep, insatiate, yawning still for more,
A rooted, strong desire—a love to thrive,

A sharp propensity to gather gain,
At ev'ry hazard, and at all expense
Of feeling, comfort, and of honest fame;
Yea, ev'n religion's holy precepts fail,
Wax feeble, and oft die beneath its power!
The Christian, urg'd by this unhallow'd sting,
Doles out, with steady hand, the measur'd draught
Of mental poison, sweeten'd o'er with smiles,
Till fellow-Christians wallow on the floor,
And foam and curse in wildest, madden'd rage:
Ev'n deacons of the temple freely give
To raw communicant, on Sunday morn,
The passport, sign, pledge, token, symbol mete,
Or whate'er else is deem'd a guarantee
Of worthy membership to heavenly rites,
And ere the evening of to-morrow comes,
For money sells him that accursed thing
Which, on the tenets of his own pure creed,
Is certain passport to eternal death!
These are sharp strictures—sharper that they're true,
And truth is powerful in correcting vice:
I would, were 't possible, make men perceive
The grand utility—the blest effects
Of being all-consistent with their creeds.

What boots it though the tavern-keeper bawl
Against a nation's bondage and harsh laws,
Or walk through all formality of rites,
And boast and bully o'er religion's truth,
If still, at ease, he lives on others' toil,
And in his very calling dooms mankind
To heavier chains and loads of deeper guilt?
Or what avail the groanings of the crowd,
Its maledictions on the ruling power,
Its loud complaints against the galling yoke,
Its unions, speeches, meetings and resolves,
If in the end the objects realis'd
Are doubly-doubled thraldom self-impos'd,
And weeping wives and famish'd progeny?
The monarch on the throne sees far abroad—
"That which hath wings," said Solomon the wise,
"Will tell the matter."—All our evil deeds,
Our foibles, follies, vices, and disputes,
Find readier access to the "gracious ear,"
Than do our murmurs or our humble prayers,
And better far kings love to hear and see
Our discords, quarrels, drunkenness, and woe,
Than ought of our prosperity and skill.
They know, forsooth, their thrones' foundations rest

On our disunions, ignorance, and strife,
And, smiling on our instability,
With dignified indignity demand,
" Are these the men who seek to tumble thrones?
Are these the future rulers of the world?
These shreds and patches of humanity,
Who want stability enough to rule,
With just economy, their own affairs,
And who, to glut the minions of our will,
Impoverish their naked hovel homes,
And in the dram-shop fatten our excise!"
Such is the merited contempt, the crowd,
The ignominious, soul-less, cringing mass,
Must bear from all who only live to rule.
Yet, O, I love these sons of honest toil—
These sun-burnt children of stern industry—
These trampled men of labour, on whose nerves
The wealth of nations, and the weal of man,
Have risen, prosper'd, and for ages hung.
I live, and work, and sleep, and eat, and talk,
Rejoice and mourn, and sigh, and sing, and laugh,
And weep, with peasants—they have been, and are,
And still must be, while aught of life remains,
My gay companions or kind comforters:

From them I learn'd my usefulness—my trade,
My language, habits, morals, foibles, faults,
Passions and instincts, rudiments of thought,
The germs of knowledge—first ideas all
From humble peasants were transfer'd to me—
All that I am in body and in soul,
All that is lovely in the perish'd past,
All in the present worthy of regard,
Or in the future yielding aught of hope,
With peasants and with peasant-scenes is blent:
A peasant nurs'd me, and in softest strains
Above my cradle sung my lullaby;
I suck'd my life-blood from her kindly breast,
Yea, life's first breath itself I drew from her—
I call'd her "MOTHER"—dear and deathless name—
And she—yes, she was just a peasant girl!
I love the millions; but I cannot love
The follies and the vices they pursue.
I've reason'd with the drunkard—check'd the lewd—
Preach'd to the ignorant—reprov'd the fool—
Rebuk'd fanatics—scolded the profane—
Decried the cruel—satiriz'd the proud—
Declaim'd 'gainst all dishonesty, and strove,
As far as humble effort would extend,

To stop the current of the vicious age;—
But all in vain—men will not, cannot think.
Habit and prejudice make half the man:
Each man makes laws for all men but himself,
And few can act as other people bid.
Then who could blame the unreflecting crowd?
Its crimes in ignorance alone have root,
And this is amply furnish'd by the State.
And think ye—O ye rulers! can ye think
That these your halcyon days will never end?
Think ye the writhings of the monster *mob*
Will always fill the coffers of th' excise?
Be not deceived—these are portentous times—
The beast turns restive, shakes itself, and yawns!
Yes, Byron's little bird sings louder now;*
O hear its song, nor madly laugh to scorn
The lessons of a Tyler or a Tell!
Think not that Mind, though doubly purified,

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* "But never mind—God save the king; and kings—
Or if *He* don't, I doubt if *men* will longer—
Methinks I hear a little bird that sings,
'*The people by and bye will be the stronger.*'"
Don Juan.

Is less susceptible of insult now,
Or less resistive than in days of yore,
When Wallace or harsh Cromwell spurr'd it on:
Be wise in time—review your former deeds—
Speak gently, soothing speeches to the crowd—
Relax your iron grasp, lest its vast power,
Stung into life by hunger and hard words,
And madden'd with the drunkard's drink, bursts forth,
And with one mingled and terrific yell
Of "Vengeance! Vengeance! Slaughter!" hurries on,
Till thrones, and principalities, and powers,
Are strew'd like bubbles on an angry sea.

'Tis Sabbath morn—again the streets are fill'd;
The votaries of public worship swarm—
All, all is life and stir and gay apparel.
The abettors of unnumber'd, jarring creeds
In all directions meet, and hurry on,
Pass and repass to where their party Gods
In varied portions of the town sojourn;
And many a serious, sober, godly man,
Whose life and labours bless his hoary hairs,
And scatter dignity around our race,
With solemn mein, in ev'ry sect is found;
Nor sect nor party can absorb his love—

His soul, expanding, would embrace the whole!
And many a canting, puritanic boor,
Of rigid honesty prescribed by law,
And who, wer't not the terrors of the rope,
Or dread of hell, had certainly been hang'd!
Austere, harsh, gloomy, and forbidding churl,
Whose niggard soul ne'er felt a gen'rous pang
Of sympathy for others' mightiest woes,
And whose hard fist ne'er parted with an alms,
Unless he hop'd for usury in heaven!
Religion's curse, and nature's foulest stain,
Who measures God's omnipotence and love
By his own stingy feelings, and believes
That heaven was made for his poor, paltry sect!
He, too, with ev'ry party strides along,
As though he walk'd by mathematic rule.
Coxcombs in chains, and the more flimsy fops,
Prudes, coquettes, giddy-headed dames and daws,
And blushing, bashful maids, and smiling nymphs,
Whose mirthful face and lovely laughing eye
Have more of life than deep devotion's air,
And men of business, learning, and all trades,
And many who do nought but live and spend—
All, all this mingled and promiscuous mass

Of creeds, shapes, garbs, grades, age, and sex, which thus
Pretends to one exclusive sacred aim,
Is urg'd by motives as diversified
As are the forms and features of its parts—
Fashion, necessity, pride, fear, and love,
Int'rest and vanity, in social bond
Combine to swell the worship-loving host,
And lend to piety a potent name;
But motives all are hid—th' impartial eye
Sees nought but one bright, dazzling display
Of wealth and gaiety portray'd in dress—
Or haply, at a transient glance, perceives
Some worn-out spirit, or dull, heavy head,
Tir'd with hard labour or last night's debauch,
And driven to church by dread of losing caste,
Seems mutt'ring, as it slowly drawls along,
"I'll soon be slumb'ring snugly in my pew;"
But charity o'er motives flings a veil,
And kindly gives sincerity to all.

The rush is past—a calm—an empty calm
Hangs on the streets—death-like desertion seems
Sole tenant of the town, save where, perchance,
Some dizzy artizan, in working garb,
Through private door of meanest tavern steals,

And for his coppers begs a "quick'ning glass."
The city-guard performs his short patrol,
And nought indecorous of feud or fraud
Disturbs the equal tenor of his pace,
Save where the hungry vagrant dogs break out
In worrying conflict o'er some filthy bone
Or useless garbish floating on the stream.
But who is she with smileless, bloated face,
And haggard, tearless, loveless, red swoln eyes,
Who in the mouth of the dark ally stands,
And still as thitherward returns the guard,
Like skulking guilt, afraid of open day,
Retreats some paces from his dreaded view?
It is the city-wench—who all night long,
Unhoused, unbedded, stroll'd upon the streets,
Or in dark lanes and passages alone
Stood shiv'ring, trembling, anxious as night owl
To seize unwary wight, in hopes to ply
Those little, artful stratagems and cheats,
By which she earns a miserable meal!
But all her sleepless watchings have been vain.
The cold night winds that shook her scanty robes,
The hunger, weariness, and rude rebuffs,
Have brought no success—all her little arts

Have been but profitless—her soul is sick—
She dare not cross the threshold of her home,
Till some peace-offering 's earn'd wherewith to soothe
The worthless baud's unsympathising frown.
Poor child of destitution and disgrace!
Unhappy outcast, whence this awful doom?
Did no fond mother kiss thy infant cheek,
And, in the fervour of her glowing soul,
Breathe one short prayer for virtue to her child?
Yea, yea that prayer was breath'd, but breath'd in vain,
Though full of ardour, love, and hopeful joy,
As though thou hadst been heiress to a throne—
But one false step—one rash, one thoughtless act,
One yielding to a natural desire,
Has doom'd thee to a most unnatural doom.
Society, that artificial dame,
Who tortures crimes created by herself,
Deceived, deluded, ruin'd, cast thee forth
Beyond the precincts of reclaiming care,
To wander friendless, fortuneless, forlorn,
To bear the rudeness, taunts, insults, and scorn,
Be trampled, spit upon, and beat by such
As caus'd at first, and still protracts thy guilt.
But thou art useful!—cities make thee so—

Great nations and commercial people find
That such as thee are necessary ills!
Good heavens! has man—has civilised man,
In his refining mania, found out
That happiness can only live secure
Amid the ruins of pure nature's laws?
Can virtue only feed on virtue's blood,
Or real honour grow upon disgrace?
Accurs'd discovery! perish from the earth!
O! let man to his savage state return,
Where such refin'd injustice is unknown,
And where no portion of the tribe is doom'd
To pleasure others at their souls' expense:
Nay, even the beasts which ravage on the wild,
And in their intercourse seek mutual bliss,
Would curse thy fate, poor child—would pity thee,
Thou germ of cities falsely civilised!
The *law* protects thee! O most gen'rous law!
Protects thee in thy infamy and vice—
Protects thee with her bridewells and her jails—
Protects thee in the practice of that guilt
Which ev'n thine own sear'd heart so deeply feels,
That only darkness kindly hides the blush
Which modest nature spreads upon thy cheek.

Thou art the creature of commercial life—
Refined society has nurtur'd thee.
Rank, wealth, and learning, talent, genius, all
Have hugged, embrac'd, kiss'd, fondled, kick'd thee forth
A thing of loathing and infectious death!
Ev'n holy men have pluck'd thy petticoats,
Perhaps to lead thee to their "better land,"
But lessen'd not thy sorrow nor thy guilt!
Sad child of misery! creature of despair!
Poor homeless, hopeless, heartless, withering thing,
And is this all that Britain's boasted wealth,
Her glory and renown—her moral fame—
Her holy Christianity and creeds,
And "land of Bibles," have secur'd to thee?
Frail orphan of the world! society has been
To thee a very step-dame.—But ev'n now
The faded roses on thy cheeks presage
That bounteous nature will ere long bequeath
The hallow'd rest which thine one species marr'd,
And thou, the victim of disease and scorn,
Shalt sleep as soundly in her blest embrace,
As those who tempt'd thee first from virtue's path,
And then debarr'd thy penitent return.

The city swarms with ills—disease and death

Are billeted in ev'ry twentieth door!
At ev'ry turn we meet the "sable group"
Conveying solemnly to Death's long home
The shatter'd fragments of a thing that liv'd.
The "well-plum'd hearse," and meaner, rustic band
Of half-dress'd tradesmen, carrying the pall
Of fellow lab'rer, have their weeping friends,
And lamentations, equally sincere:
One common task is pensively perform'd,
One common doom is in the end secur'd—
The pompous cavalcade and humble bier
Are but the different pathways to the grave,
And end alike in dust, and weeds, and worms!—
The man of empire and unbounded fame
Is but distinguished from the still-born babe,
Whom Superstition buries in the dark,
By ranker weeds or shovelfuls of dust,
At best by some frail slab or monument,
The representative of living pride.
Men congregate in cities, till the scenes
Of human misery no more awake
Commiseration for their fellows' woe—
The frequency of death and sickness sears
The sensibility of human souls,

Till scarce a pang of sympathy survives,
Till death and dirges seem mere common-place,
And till, at times, strange medleys may be seen,
The fiddle and the fun'ral side by side.

In ev'ry city, hamlet, village, town,
Men violate the simple laws of life,
And spread disease, in wilful ignorance,
Till some appalling epidemic sweeps
Its millions to the dust; then marvel why
So many honest, righteous people died,
Or why the rural peasantry escap'd,
While desolation ravag'd through the town.

The ev'ning sun o'er Arran's lofty brow,
Serenely smiling, bade *our* world good night;
To many 'twas a last farewell—yea, even
To some, whose vivid hearts, unhing'd from thought,
Seem'd flushed and dancing with the cup of life.

The village bell had closed the hours of toil,
Mechanics met, and stood in little groups
About the public corners of the town,
And laughed and spake of all the floating news,
Or mutter'd rude remarks on lively nymphs
Whom pride or business hurried o'er the street.
Uncomely tales of riots at the fair,

Or ball-room broils, or tipsy lewdness, fell,
'Midst vulgar laughter, on the list'ner's ear.
A few, whose thirst had scarcely ceas'd to crave,
Slunk to the ale-house, and in noisy mirth
Enveloped all that elevates the man.

The merchant, musing on his success, hung
Across his counter, or, with some shrewd friend
Whom lack of labour furnish'd with an hour,
Convers'd with pertness on the mighty things
That would be done in politics and trade;
The matron ply'd her thrift; the buxom maid
Before her toilet, self-adoring, stood,
Adjusting matters for the coming ball;
The thoughtless stripling, who supposed that life
Was made of sunshine and uninjured health,
Play'd off his little wicked pranks and jokes
On dizzy bacchanal, whose muddy head
Held frequent converse with his miry feet.

So things went on—so had they gone before:
The village seem'd all happiness and glee,
And flush'd with hope of pleasures yet to come;
And ev'n the sinking sun appear'd replete
With smiles benignant from the fount of heaven,
That promised long felicity to man:

When lo! the shriek of terror—uncouth sound!
From yonder hovel wildly pierc'd the ear;
Its humble master, as by magic kill'd,
Had ceased to live, and scarcely knew he ail'd!
Another shriek proclaim'd another death!
Another! yea, a fourth! The plague went on!
Amazement spread! Conjecture, thin as air,
With many a ghostly shadow in her train,
Rose up to solve the problem why they died:
'Twas in the atmosphere—'twas in the clothes—
The food—the blood—the lungs—the mind—'twas fear—
'Twas constitutional—contagious—mild—
Severe—incurable—a simple thing—
A mighty mystery ne'er to be disclos'd.
Such were the vulgar theories pursu'd,
All empty as the breath that gave them birth:
And spite of all, the pestilence stalk'd on
With silent step, and sudden death, and wo,
And bitterness to many; and to all
Dismay and terror. Men's hearts fail'd for fear.
Suspended seem'd all labour and affairs:
All human life stood still as petrified,
And hung the head, and sigh'd a hopeless sigh,
As though creation's final doom had come.

Friends met upon the street and halted mute,—
Or if they spoke, 'twas with a shaking head,
Half muttering, " 'Tis an awful time, indeed !"
They parted with a nod, and met no more:
For ere the next day's sun had gone his round,
The lone note of the village bell proclaim'd
That one, or both, should, in a little hour,
Be laid to mingle with the dust of death.
The tender wife, behind the curtains clasp'd,
In love's embrace, her lively spouse at ev'n,
And, with the rising ray of light, beheld
The ghastly features of her lifeless lord!
The husband saw the wife, whose healthy hand
Had dress'd the meal of which he last partook,
Lie struggling in the ravages of death!
A few short hours were all that interven'd
Between the strong, robust, athletic swain,
And the cold lump of dull, unconscious clay!
The plague went on—and oh! what dire distress,
And wo, and lamentation, and despair,
And clouded brows, and melancholy dark,
O'er all the village spread! and still anon
Deep wailings for the dead, and mingled groans
Of agonised life expiring fast

From many a dwelling came. Small sable groups
Round many a door in sullen silence stood,
With hand on mouth, to ward contagion's breath,
All mournful, waiting to convey the corpse
To the lone mansions of the peaceful dead;—
Yet none approach'd the bier, save those few friends
Whose sympathy was strong as love of life:
All distant stood—yea, ev'n the Man of God,—
He, who alone knew why the people died,
And solv'd the problem with "'Tis Heaven's decree!"
His daily theme of happiness in Heaven,
And angel's harp, and glory's diadem,
And righteous hope, that would be realis'd
With strange unutterable things, reserv'd
For all who did believe, had made him deem
Honours and riches—yea, and life itself,
Mere secondary things, vain trifles, trash,—
Vague bubbles, quite unworthy the regard
Of dignified, immortal things like man;—
Yet, even *he* felt smitten with the dread—
Forgot his calling and his trust in God—
Refus'd to minister the gospel's balm
To dying husband, or to widow'd wife.
The plague went on—and awful numbers died,

Of every age, and sex, and rank, and kind;
The matron of threescore—the blooming maid—
The sucking child—the babe within the womb
Died while unborn—the foolish and the wise—
The weak—the strong—the wicked and the good—
The lusty tradesman and the sickly fop—
The child of misery and the man of wealth—
The florid drunkard, and the sage who spurn'd
The dazzling cup that held the poison'd draught;—
All fell alike before the dreadful scourge!

Died, then, the virtuous?—yea, I knew him well,
A man of stern, unbending principle,
With soul untutor'd to the yoke of power,
Unawed by wealth or popular renown;
He prayed and laboured for the rights of all,
Till even interest, that supinely lulls
The conscience of the high priest and the king,
Shrunk from his being, as ashamed to meet
Inflexible alliance to the truth.
And he is gone! the voice of heaven—that breathes
Upon the midnight wind—that sweeps his grave
While I repeat this short, expressive dirge,
"Peace to his ashes"—seems to say "Amen."

Unhappy village! what art thou become?

Sad emblem of the fleeting things of life!
What bosom bleeds not for thy careless woes?
Deserted homes, and orphans' plaintive cries,
And widows' tears, and deep parental throes,
And solitary husband's stifled groan,
Lead back the mind through time's encumber'd maze
To Egypt's mourning for her fond first-born,
Or Rama's wailing for her children slain.
The plague went on.—Conjecture ceas'd, for now
All theories seem'd vain—men only fear'd,
Nor knew what 'twas they dreaded! 'Twas fear of fear.
The grave physician,—whose best feelings fell
A sacrifice long since, before the shrine
Of motley ills,—who fatten'd on disease,
And mark'd with apathetic unconcern
The thousand thousand various forms of pain
That rack'd the carcass of humanity,—
Stood here without one scientific phrase,
Observed the ravage of the strange unknown,
Bluntly confess'd his ignorance and awe,
And cross'd his arms, and said, "'Tis death! 'tis death!"
And what is death?—but first, say what is life—
A curious mechanism—a strange effect—
An undefin'd *immeasurable*—a spark

Of subtile fire—a negative of weight—
A pendulous vibration—a desire
Of consciousness—a mystic quality—
A feeling, property, or latent power,
Which loves and still perpetuates itself—
A simple sequence of peculiar form,
Which, like the tones of music's instruments,
Is modulated by organic modes,
And stops whene'er the organs are derang'd:
I saw the æolian harp laid on the ground,
Its strings were quivering in the gentle breeze,
Its tones were sweet and varied—it did seem
A thing of life and feeling;—but anon
I saw 't unstrung, its strings lay by its side;
The harp, as formerly, was whole and sound,
The balmy breeze swept o'er it as before,
All things were what they had been save its tones,
And these were musicless, and mute, and dead:—
The squirrel, leaping on the chesnut boughs,
Seem'd like a magazine of perfect life;
It fell upon the grass—I took it up,
Fur, skin, flesh, sinews, nerves, bones, muscles, blood,
Brain, and intestines, all appear'd entire—
The very squirrel that so lately leapt

Upon the chesnut boughs, forsooth, was there,
Weight, size, and form, and colour, all complete;
But just some valve, or string, or chord, had broke,
And chang'd the motion to a thing call'd Death!
It, too, had turn'd a stringless, toneless harp.
All things that live are living to decay,
And all decaying life will live again;
Yet all, however fond of change, are loath
To part with life, though full of weeds and thorns.
The little gnat, whose age is but an hour,
Feels the tenacity, and, near its end,
Gives some convulsive flutters, as if meant
To grasp existence on a longer lease;
The sky-lark screams before the rav'nous kite;
The timid hare flies panting from the hound;
The swan her death-hymn echoes dolefully;
The dauntless goat weeps o'er the fatal knife;
And the mild lamb turns up a piteous eye,
And pleads for mercy at its murd'rer's hand—
'Tis loath to die—ev'n when the mortal steel
Has touch'd the vital citadel, it leaps,
And kicks, and struggles, anxious still to live,
Till the last drop of blood has left the heart,

And then—ev'n then, some solitary nerve
Will start, as though it hop'd to live alone!
And man is more tenacious of life:
Boys wish for youth, and youth for manhood sighs,
And man looks longingly for distant days,
Which realis'd, just make him wish again,
Till term on term, and event on event,
Have brought him to the confines of the grave,
A hoary creature, full of years and pains—
And still he longs for morn, and noon, and night,
And night brings darkness and increase of pain;
He tumbles, turns, yawns, finds no posture *best*,
Thinks darkness lone and lonely, and again
Just turns, and wishes for to-morrow's dawn—
Yet would not die—he trembles at the thought,
And, as the vulture fastens deep his fangs,
And grasps still closer round the bleeding heart,
His eyes roll wildly—terror gives him strength,
He flings his limbs, and with convulsive force
Clings to his bed-clothes, till the desp'rate grasp
Can scarce be slacken'd when the man's no more!
The old, the young, the sinner, and the saint,
And ev'n the very prodigal of time

Who studies how to shorten ev'ry hour,
Alike reluctantly dispense with life.
Though "death were nothing, and nought after death,"
Yet man, superior to the crawling worm
In life, organization, consciousness,
Has *love of life* proportion'd to his sphere,
A volume of resistance to decay
A thousand-fold more powerful, and could not,
More than the worm, exterminate himself,
And sure the worm but seldom dies from choice.
The Suicide is mad, or madly brave;
But ev'n his valour often fails, too late,
When nature, rising in her native strength,
Flings back a ling'ring, wistful look on life,
And from her soul could wish the deed undone.
The grave is horrible even by itself,
Apart from all futurity:—the wretch
Of sternest wretchedness looks bluntly shy,
Recoils and trembles, and would sooner hug
His gnawing misery, with all her stings,
Than lull his sorrows in a proffer'd grave.
The broad red sun had sunk behind the hill,
And not a cloud nor speck diversified
(As far as eye could stretch) the concave vault;

Nor glittering star nor moon had dar'd to break
The dull monotony of ev'ning's sky:
The whole horizon glow'd with equal dye,
Like one unchequer'd, undivided plain,
Save where the western verge was ting'd with gold
From Sol's last breathings as he sunk to sleep.
The din of labour and the voice of mirth
Were lull'd to silence, and the hopeless moan
Of human misery was heard no more.
Earth, air, and sky seem'd sliding into rest,
A stirless, changeless, bright tranquillity,
As if eternity had just begun!

But lives the land, however rich and good,
Or glows the scene, however grand or gay,
Or rises morn, or falls the ev'ning mild,
Where human kind exists but fosters woe?
And here, too, 'mid this still, calm loneliness,
Where silence wrapt the world like the sad pall
Of past existence, there was *one* who trac'd,
In dreary solitude, the glowing charms,
And view'd alone, as monarch of the whole,
The vast expanse of earth, and air, and sky:
Yet he was sad—the burnish'd firmament—
The balmy breeze—the fertile vale—the hill

That carried verdure midway to the heavens,
In vain pour'd forth, with lavish kindliness,
Their beauties on his darksome mind—his eye
Seem'd eager, wand'ring in the world of thought,
Quite heedless of earth's grandeur, or the smile
Of peace that hung from heav'n, for—*he was sad.*
A man he was not passing forty years,
Yet shrunken, wither'd—three-score-ten he seem'd;
His hair, which nature had intended black,
Was grey with grief, and from his bones
Had sorrow, and deep thought purloin'd the flesh,
So that his sinews and his large blue veins
Protruded, and display'd in living form
The frame-work or the skeleton of life—
His garb, of simplest make, all loosely hung
In sluggish carelessness, and all his mein
Bespoke a sickly, misanthropic soul.
His step was sad, as heavily he pac'd
Yon little rising mound, where lonely rears
The village church its weather-beaten spire,
And, like the solitary gnome, proclaims
The fleeting destiny of all that lives—
Sad, sad he was, as carefully he strode
O'er the small hillocks, where serenely slept

The mould'ring relics of his friends and foes;
But enmity was dead—and now he view'd
With equal sympathy the lone abodes
Of those who lov'd and those who hated once.
Full oft he paus'd, and ponder'd as he pass'd
The resting-places of his youthful peers,
And gazing on the verdure of their graves,
Retrac'd the fairer portions of their lives.
At length he reach'd the far, sequester'd nook
Of Death's o'er-crowded, equalising realm,
Where magic-like the world's distinctions cease,
And 'neath yon hoary elm, where the lone rook
Her solitary nest for ages hung;
Upon the grave's dread brink he sat him down,
And with a deep, deep sigh survey'd the cell—
'Twas newly dug—'twas cold—'twas tenantless—
Its last inhabitant per-force expell'd
By the unfeeling sexton, scatter'd lay
Among the hemlock and the long fat grass,
In senseless, fleshless, worm-eaten bones,
As disrespected as the shapeless shreds
Of what had been his coffin—yea, forsooth,
Such are the honours death has to bestow!
Oh! he was sad, as in the new-made grave

He gaz'd intensely, for, though tenantless,
Ere half a circuit of the sun was trac'd,
Its yawning mouth should swallow his last friend!
The world had us'd him harshly, and his soul
Of giant stature spurn'd the tyrant lash,
Till, writhing 'neath the tortures and mishaps,
His heart was broke, and life became a load,
And now he came, with trembling step, and sad,
To naturalise him with the land of Death!
And much he gaz'd, and reason'd with his heart
To reconcile it to its long, last home.
The evils of the past—the present woe—
The dark'ning prospects of the coming day—
Pain, sickness, poverty, and helpless age,
And lack of friends, and calumny's foul tongue,
Insult and raillery, and all the host
Of nameless ills that feed upon our race,
Were conjur'd up in horrible array,
And ting'd with dark hues of his own sad soul,
To bend the heart to brook her irksome doom;
And independence to the proud was life,
And rest was sweet to guiltless misery,
And sleep, sound sleep to weary wretch was heav'n.
Thus argu'd he, and in his languid eye

Ephem'ral joy in fitful glances shone,
And momentary pleasure flush'd his cheek—
But still the grave was loathsome—and as oft
As lower'd his glance deep in its dreary womb,
Cold tremblings of reluctant horror thrill'd
His meagre frame, and shiver'd through his blood,
Sicken'd his soul, and, like the thunder cloud,
Bedim'd and darken'd what had else been bright.
He look'd around him, and abroad, beheld
Both hill and dale, and river, lake, and wood,
Hamlet and city, and the great man's halls,
And lofty mountain, and extended sea,
With islands slumb'ring on her breast afar;
And all was beautiful, and glow'd as yet
With golden tinges of the setting sun,
Blushing the beauties of pure loveliness,
And wooing man to love life and the world.
But what avail'd this vast variety
To him whose soul was sad, nor now possess'd
One single foot-breadth of his Maker's world?
He but beheld his own oppressor's wealth,
And rather loath'd than lov'd the glorious scene.
He look'd to heav'n—not with that selfish stare
Of positive assurance that the grave

And glory everlasting were for him
Insep'rably link'd—nor with that dread
Of conscious guilt, which shakes and shrinks, and views
The tomb as threshold to eternal woe—
These doctrines he had learn'd, nor learn'd to doubt,
But, 'mid the vast perplexities of life,
Had half forgotten them:—and now he rais'd
His modest brow, and gazing o'er the sky,
Wonder'd if in that vast eternity
Of changeless *nothingness* there did exist,
For wearied spirits, an immortal home—
And long he thought and reason'd on both sides,
And gaz'd intensely o'er the azure vault,
And wish'd and hop'd the theory were true!
But ah! not ev'n a star was seen—his eye,
Like Noah's dove, could find no resting-place,
And, disappointed, sought its ark, the grave!
But still the grave was loathsome—and again
Cold shiverings shook his blood—he shrunk apace,
And, musing, stood sad, puzzled, and perplex'd,
As though the iron enter'd in his soul:
He look'd upon the earth—then on the heav'ns—
Then, disappointed, with a deep, deep sigh,

Gaz'd in the grave, and, weeping as he went,
Retrac'd his steps to struggle on with life.
The *love of life* is truly life itself;
Desire to be is the responding voice,
The faithful echo, that perpetuates
A consciousness of being—yet, harsh man!
O piteous truth! has strain'd his mental powers,
His ingenuity, and muscles strong,
More than on feats of universal good,
In framing systems and devising means
For marring, torturing, and destroying life!—
His legal and religious butcheries,
His deeds of blood, however bold the task,
O Muse, sing now in truth's unshrinking strain.

THE ARGUMENT.

An Allegorical Description of the Origin and Progress of Oppression—War—its Causes and Consequences—Unjust Nature and dreadful Effects of the British War in India—Surajah's Prayer—Serious Address to Britain on the Iniquity of her Colonising Principles—What is Monarchy—Religion—Faith—its baneful Influence on Morality—Description of a Strange Character—Address to Faith—the Poor Man's Death—Life and Death rendered additionally Miserable by Artificial Means—the Malefactor—Benevolence of Nature's Dispensations compared with the Revengeful Spirit of Man—Purchased Prayers.

BOOK III.

" Religion, freedom, vengeance, what you will.
A *word's* enough to raise mankind to kill,
Some factious phrase by cunning caught and spread,
That guilt may reign, and wolves and worms be fed."

Byron's Laura.

I STOOD upon Mount Retrospect, and lo!
In the dim distance of departed years,
Far back beyond Cairo's pyramids,
Created wisdom struggled to create
Some prodigy whereon man's name might live.—
And now 'tis done.—In centre of the crowd,
Twisting and writhing into life appear'd
The huge misshapen monster, whose rude form
And vast unwieldy bulk, seemed not akin
To aught that God's creative hand had form'd.
A sullen, dull determination lurk'd
Supinely in his eye, and on his brow
Bondage and murder, partially conceal'd,
Enthroned sat. Listless he yawn'd, and shook
His grisly mane, as if imploring aid
From his creators, who in scorn beheld

His inactivity, and spurr'd him on,
While still the feeble suffer'd from his tread.
At length, convinc'd the monster lack'd a guide,
The subtle few, in secret conclave, fram'd
A kind of phantom-shadow made like man;
They hight it Monarchy, and swore that heaven
Had sent it down, empower'd with right Divine
To ride this great Oppressor o'er the world.
And now the Beast, urg'd by the phantom's skill,
With lengthen'd strides travers'd the peopled globe,
Bequeathing chains and vassalage to all,
And blood and death to millions of mankind.
Realms that erewhile bloomed in perfect peace,
Nor ever dream'd of war save with a dread,
Were now, pursuant to the Beast's behest,
Dragg'd to the field, their liquid life pour'd forth
In copious streams to drench their native soil,
And inundate the verdure that had once
Impress'd with happiness their grateful souls.
Yea, mighty empires, trampled in the dust,
Have long since ceas'd to live—their names alone
Are dimly written in the world's archives.
The peasant, slumb'ring on his couch of straw,
Enjoying dreams by labour render'd sweet,

In fiendish fury, hurried from the bed
Of faithful spouse, and rosy babes that slept,
Unconscious of the darkness-shrouded deed,
Woke not from the delirium of his dream
Till war's loud thunders echo'd in his ear
At famous Nile or glorious Trafalgar.

The lover, seated by the sylvan brook,
Or milk-white hawthorn in the cheery glade,
With raptures of unclouded extacy
Sung love's seraphic music to the ear
Of one whose very soul was twined with his,
And who gaz'd forward with a hopeful eye
To future days of boundless happiness,
Was torn from all his heart had ever lov'd
To glut the thirsty appetite of war.

The wand'ring savage strode the desert path,
With bended bow, in quest of living food,
And, wearied and exhausted, stretched him down
Beneath the shadow of his favourite tree,
Where, o'er the ashes of his perish'd sires,
He slept his liberty's last living sleep,
And woke but with the clanking of his chains!

The child that sported by its mother's door,
Unconscious that such things as fetters were,

Was borne and barter'd for some paltry toys,
In climes remote, to feel a tyrant's lash,
Nor more to know a freedom or a home!
And still the Beast went on—and still I saw
The shadow keep its seat. Near and more near,
Through Time's elapsing maze, I mark'd his course,
Till on the Gaul his iron foot was placed—
Till on the necks of Poland's hardy sons
Were rivetted his fetters—till I heard
The grating of his chains—the struggling groans
Of sinking nature, crush'd beneath his tread—
Then marvel'd I if mankind all were blind,
Or if they slept, or if they lov'd the Beast,
Till I beheld an agitation dawn,
Stirring the minds of men, like wither'd leaves
Stirr'd by the evening's breeze; and some seem'd fond
To give mankind their native liberty,
And drive the Beast and Rider from the world:
When lo! the Priests! the Ministers of God,
Leapt up instinctively, and cried aloud,
"Touch not the Lord's anointed, but submit!"
Then Freedom's sons were hooted from the crowd,
And all things just continued as they were.
Not abject thraldom, nor the name of serf,

Was deem'd sufficient to degrade the mob,
But fiery tortures and debasing deaths,
Massacres, dungeons, piecemeal butcheries;
And all of pangs and sorrows that the mind
Of hellish genius thought or could create,
Were heap'd relentless on the passive crowd.
The grey-hair'd sire was doom'd, ah! cursed deed,
To steep his wither'd hands in the pure blood
Warm reeking from his only son's pierc'd heart!
The virtuous matron was compell'd to view,
With shiverings worse than death's horrific throes,
Her maiden daughter glut the lustful rage
Of ruffians who anon should murder both!
The infant, sucking on its mother's breast,
In wanton cruelty, was pois'd in air
On point of that same spear that in a trice
The weeping, widow'd mother should divide!
O! what a feast to feed a mother's eyes,
When season'd by malignity and scorn—
Oh Jewish crucifers, "*Woman! look!*
Behold thy Son!"—and deeper insult still,
"The serpent seedling of a traitor sire!"*

* Specimens of these refined cruelties were exhibited in Irelaad so late as the close of the last century.

Such are the great Oppressor's mighty deeds,
That marvellous monster which mankind call'd forth
To show their love of immortality.
Yet countless thousands worshipped the Beast,
And to his Rider gave Jehovah's due:
While in his hand the shadow held uprear'd
The pond'rous book of Fame, in which were scroll'd,
In characters of blood, the dreadful names
And titles of his doughty votaries.
And how ludicrous was it to behold
Things—dwarfs in body, and in soul half-form'd,
With cowardly courage steep in human gore
Their little hands, and strain, and toil, and twist,
Till every nerve was strain'd in hopes to blot
The Monarch's register with their small names;
While many fail'd, and tumbled in the mire,
Where, all unnotic'd, 'neath the Monster's hoof,
They shrunk from life, and never more were seen.
The Beast went on, and blood, and groans, and fire,
Told when and where he journeyed o'er the land;
Cities were burned, and o'er the extended plain,
Rich with the bounties of a fertile soil,
Blaz'd, in one gen'ral conflagration dire,
The waving corn, by autumn mellow'd quite,

The hind and horse, the shepherd and his flock,
Cottage and inmates, all that liv'd and mov'd,
Or form'd the features of the landscape fair:
And, step by step, man deepen'd in disgrace,
His dignity decay'd and disappear'd,
The moral image of his God was gone,
And beast-like toil and beast-like death were his—
Till hell stood up on tiptoe, and in joy
Grinn'd o'er the prostrate and degraded race;
Earth stagger'd like a drunkard, and the air
Sicken'd and reel'd disorderly and wild;
Heaven shook and wept; and the vast universe
Seem'd sinking 'neath Corruption's pond'rous load.

And what is war? 'Tis hight the game of kings—
'Tis worthy of the dignity, for they,
Like heroes of the chess-board, push mankind
To tread each other's toes, as if in sport,
Which, grown to wrath, knocks out each other's brains;
And this is war—and war is royal sport—
The very child of kings, and, like its sires,
Blights, as a common curse, the joys of life.

The Savage Chief, whose rude, uncultur'd mind,
Untam'd by science, ranges in the chace,
Or wanders fiercely in his tractless woods,

Sees earth's best beauties—views the glowing heav'ns,
Gazes on nature in her native charms,
And bows instinctively in formal rites
To please imaginary monster gods;
Yet cannot learn, in all creation's maze,
One solitary lesson, nor discern
One single trace of all th' unerring laws
Which bring existence to the world and him—
Nay, cannot learn to cultivate the soil
Nor woo the earth for necessary food;
Still he has learn'd, though ignorant, to kill—
His tribes have learn'd to shout the war-hoop wild,
And, press'd by hunger or their chieftain's call,
Can drown the arrow or the coral spear
Deep in the life-blood of their fellow-tribes!
The man of commerce learns to kill for gold;
The patriot for freedom wages war;
The son of glory butchers for renown;
And Jew and Persian, Mussleman, Hindoo,
With all the other civilis'd realms,
Save Christian Britain—blessings on her love—
Murder religiously to please their gods!
O Britain! boast and terror of the world!
Mother of science! pure religion's nurse!

Cradle of freedom! where thy hardy sons
Can lose no liberty, but, bound ere born,
Still drag thy chains, and glory in their strength!
My native land! I love thy healthy shores,
Begirt and bulwark'd by the eternal deep,
Proclaiming loudly to thy sons that they,
Like their own mountain winds, were destin'd free—
Yes, Britain! thou art all a land of love—
Love fervent, zealous, unabating, pure,
Platonic in its nature; thou lov'st all
Of conquest, property, and wealth, and gold,
In ev'ry patch and corner of the world!—
The ocean foaming in destructive rage—
The desert, with her thirsty, herbless sands—
The forest howling with voracious death—
The Himaleyan mountains, whose appalling height
Seems hinting at a second war with heav'n—
And ev'n the endless unthaw'd hills of ice
Which nature meant to guard the polar seas,
Have all been conquer'd by thy love of gold!
The Spaniard first inspir'd thee with this love,
When Hispaniola's treasures he disclos'd;
And thou hast not disgrac'd him as a dunce.
Thou hast outdone thy teacher—not a spot,

From Hispaniola to the Esquimaux,
But has possess'd a portion of thy love—
Cities in flame and seas of human blood,
And living bonfires of her naked tribes,
Record thy amours in the Western world!
Thou art the queen of commerce! Ev'ry land
Has something thou requir'st; and thou hast one,
One simple article that suits all climes!
'Tis Christianity—Religion—Faith—
True Faith, and evangelical:
O what a rare commodity for sale!
It costs thee nothing—it is duty free
And free of freight—'tis like the wishing-cap
Of young romance—it never, never fails;
And thou hast barter'd it five thousand times,
And fill'd five thousand coffers with th' exchange,
And yet 'tis nothing less—yea, it has cost
The sable natives of the torrid zone
Their homes, their lands, their liberties, and lives,
In more gross millions than can e'er be known:
Van Dieman's savages are now no more,
And the bronze islanders of Southern Seas
Are only vassals on their own rich soil!
Yet Faith is just as trafficable now

As when 'twas first brought forward to the mart.
Slaves, savages, and cannibals have been
Its chief consumers—they alone, poor souls!
Have paid it with their country and their blood!
The empires of the earth—the *peopled* world—
The civilis'd realms—the human race—
Need not thy drugs—they make these things at home:
The Turks wish weight for weight—words are but wind;
The Persian spurns thy selfish intercourse;
The Japanese divorc'd thee long ago;*
And the refin'd and intellectual sons
Of the celestial empire have turn'd sick,
And lately damn'd thy opium and thy faith.
True, thou by stealth hast foisted thy pure creed
On India, framer of religious rites—
Fountain of mystery—nursery of priests—

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* Christianity was introduced into the populous empire of Japan in 1549, and was so favourably received by the intelligent natives, that the government sent an embassy with rich presents to Gregory XIII. In less than half a century, however, the profligacy, avarice, and dishonesty of the priests rendered their extermination necessary to the peace and prosperity of the empire; and in 1596 many thousands of them were destroyed, on refusing to abandon the country, an offer very generously given them. Since that time, no Christian, except on extraordinary occasions, has been permitted to enter the empire.

Great infant cradle of all human creeds!
Yes, Britain, blush—hide thy unhallow'd head!
Presumptuous pigmy! who could'st proffer nought
For all the Mogul's treasures and his lands
Save Christianity, which cost thee nought,
And seem'd to him a thing of yesterday
Compar'd with Brama's mysteries of years.
Thy offer was contemn'd—thou could'st not gain
One single inch of India's ancient faith;
But thou could'st gain leagues of her happy soil,
And to thy hellish thirst of wealth could'st join
Thy thirst of rapine, villainy, and war,
And, with a fiendish, guileful treachery,
Spread desolation, misery, and death,
Till blood and fire seem'd nature's final doom.
Ev'n now, methinks, beneath the banian tree*
I see Surajah's† wasted, woe-worn form,

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* The banian is the largest tree in the world. It is esteemed sacred, and held as emblematical of the deity's infinity by the Hindoos, who very frequently perform their devotional ceremonies under its shade.

† Surajah, one of the most powerful chiefs in India, after having gained several complete victories, and engaged in several honourable treaties of peace, was at length, by the duplicity and flagrant treachery

Half-naked, hungry, destitute, forlorn,
As with a languid, hopeless eye he turns
To take a last farewell of the gay plains,
And halls, and woods, and cities of his sires—
A lengthen'd line of chiefs—himself the last—
His proud heart bleeds! he weeps aloud—now kneels,
And with uplifted hands and fervent soul,
In madden'd fury supplicates his God—
"Awake, O Brahma!* be thy light'nings hurl'd
In red destruction o'er the Christian's land!
The sons of Jesus have usurp'd thy thrones,
Have robb'd thy altars—spurn'd thy holy laws—
Thrown down thy temples—trampled on thy priests—
Defied thy judgments—plunder'd thy realms;
And, in their curs'd impiety and rage,
Have slain thy children, and have mock'd thy power.
Awake, O Brahma!
Fierce Virsavana† led their murd'ring hosts
Through cities and o'er plains, through hut and hall,

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of the British, obliged to abandon his dominions. He was found destitute, and almost naked, on the road to Patna—was carried back to Muxadabad, where in a few hours afterwards he was privately beheaded.

* The Supreme Being.

† The God of Riches.

Till gold and jewels all were torn away,
Till we were hunted o'er a thousand fields,
Till flam'd the ruins of our fathers' homes,
Till butcher'd bodies lay in rotting piles,
Till Burra-Gonga* flow'd with Indian blood,
And Gropt† refus'd to calendar our woes.
Awake, O Brahma!
No more my father's banian shades my brow,
No more my father's halls resound my fame;
His dancing girls and singing nymphs are gone—
My father's bow can never more be strung!
No ray of thy eternal Spirit dawns
Upon me now—a negro darkness hangs
Above my tortur'd soul—I feel revenge,
But, feebler than Chandala,‡ ne'er again
Can quench my fire in slaught'ring Christian's blood!
Awake, O Brahma!
O may the tiger, from his bamboo home,
Come with his leapings of an hundred feet,

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* Burra-Gonga, or the Great River, is the original name of the Ganges.

† The recording angel, or the accuser.

‡ The general name given to those who have lost caste.

May the red lion of Cashmir descend,
And, with the jackals, bears, boars, panthers, wolves,
And false hyenas, which, like Christians, smile
To lure their victims to more certain death,
Come howling to their camps, and limb from limb
Tear all their hellish hosts, till cormorants
And the fierce vultures suck their children's blood!
Till all the lands of India are restor'd,
And the rich diamonds of Golconda's mines
Again belong to thy devoted sons.
Awake, O Brahma!
Arise, Iswara! * drag thy legions forth,
Bring Agnee† with his thousand streams of fire,
Till all their stores, and forts, and factories blaze
In one wide flaming incense to the skies!
Varoona!‡ Vayoo!§ rear your furious forms,
Blow, foam, and rage upon the angry deep,
Till in the whirlwind's whirlpool all their fleet,
Boats, barks, and barges sink for evermore;
And till Yam-Rajah‖ dooms their guilty souls
To dreadful torments in Narekha's¶ chains!

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* The Avenger. † The God of Fire. ‡ God of the Seas.
§ God of the Winds. ‖ The Judge of the dead.
¶ The Hell of the Hindoos.

Hear me, O Spirit that pervadest fire !
Awake, O Brahma !"
Yes, Britain, thou dost worship a mild God,
Else had thy doom long since been with the damn'd:
His vengeance slumbers long—ev'n Justice sleeps
Within the folds of some soft fleecy cloud;
For thou hast shed more blood in distant climes
Than would bear up thy boasted lawless fleet!
Yet Justice slumbers on—'twill shortly wake—
'Twill come with vengeance in an open hand.
Nature shall wake, and, in her giant strength,
Will bind thy injur'd colonies in one,
And such a weight of wrongs, come when it may,
Will crush thy glory from the living world.
Awake, repent, restore thy ill-got gains;
The hour of retribution is at hand!—
Thou smil'st at this—I know thy vanity—
Thy love of gold has canker'd to the core,
And made thy heart as callous as a stone:—
And think'st thou, or hast thou forgot to think—
I ask it solemnly—I seldom jest—
Think'st thou the Omnipotence which fills all space,
And fill'd it ere the universe was made,
And fill'd it *with* the universe, and yet

Abridged not his own residence! and will,
When this same universe returns to nought,
Fill up the vacuum with himself again!—
Think'st thou that He who could not be made less,
Though worlds on worlds in millions could be form'd
From his own essence, the infinite God!—
Think'st thou he shrivel'd and compress'd himself
Into the atom of a fœtus babe,
And liv'd a life of misery and grief,
And died upon a paltry, cursed cross,
With groanings of a dying deity!—
Think'st thou, I ask, these things were only done
That thou might'st bear the story of his woes
To those whom Vishnu* had redeem'd before,
And who, if sceptical, should all be slain,
Or if they b'liev'd should pay thee half their lands?
Perhaps thou'rt infidel, and hast no God,
But think'st that *might* is *right*; that he who gains
Most of the present, or by fraud or force,
Is neither good nor evil, but by chance
An atom favour'd by the gen'ral laws

* Vishnu, the second son of the Deity, and the Saviour of the Hindoos. His incarnations are frequent.

With ample power to gratify itself!
Is this thy faith? Then boldly speak it out;
Fling off thy guileful mantle, and good men
Will strive to heal thy dang'rous malady.
" I wish men were consistent in their creeds."
'Tis horrible, O Britain, thou should'st think
That that Omnipotence whom thou rever'st,
And who, to save all mankind, died himself,
Should smile upon thy robberies and wars,
Or seem delighted, when thy purchas'd prayers,
Like winter's snowflakes, flutter'd round his throne,
In humble supplications that his power
Might nerve the arms of thy destroying hosts,
Till India's sons in carnaged heaps were piled,
Till high and low, man, woman, child, and babe,
In countless thousands on their father-land
Lay baptized in their own pure, guiltless blood!
Think'st thou he smil'd when, in the Western world,
The gen'rous red-man was expell'd his home,
And, broken-hearted, in the dead of night
Fled to the woods to save his children's lives,
Lit by the flaming of his own wig-wam?
Or laugh'd He when thy selfish, swindling priest
To the New-Zealander first proffer'd heav'n,

Contemning earth as worthless of his care,
While at his back some minion of thy power,
Confed'rate in the fraud, with crafty leer,
Was etching on the stately maple tree
Some shapes or shams (O childish silliness!)
Which thine own arbitrary laws decreed,
Transferr'd his island to thy idiot king?
And what is Monarchy? O that the world
Upon this paltry query had been one,
What fatal discord then had man escap'd;
What seas of blood, that deeply have emba'd
The annals of humanity with guilt,
Had flow'd serenely in its native course,
Till wearied nature kindly bade it cease;
What mourning for the murder'd had been spar'd;
What countless miseries and hardships drear,
What flaming cities and undone realms,
And widows' wails and hunger'd orphans' pangs,
Had been nonentities in human ills!
And what *is* monarchy? The gorgeous priest,
Who calls himself vicegerent of the skies,
Whose knowledge of the mystical behests
Discerns all things, past, present, and to come,
And, by a life and conversation bland,

Exemplifies in lively portraiture
The sure divinity of what he says;
Avers that Heaven, in mercy to mankind,
Millions of ages ere mankind were form'd,
Did, by a just and gracious decree,
More indissoluble than Persian law,
Determine who should rule this little world,
Down to the destin'd moment when the power
Which rear'd and holds it in its balance'd course,
Withdrawn, shall leave it void of law or rule,
To reel and stagger, like the debauchee,
Back in confusion to its pristine nought!
Hence Berkley, honest man, rais'd by the king
To help Omnipotence to guard the church,
Affirm'd that man, by which the Bishop meant
A few ideas straggling through the void!
Is bound submissively to drag the yoke
Of ev'ry little tyrant *thought* that springs
Usurpingly to rule th' ideal world!
Unvarnish'd Berkley! soul of gratitude,
Who thus unblushingly could deify
The despot *thought* that hight itself a king,
And hung the shadowy mitre o'er thy head,

Thy unsubstantial, unreplenish'd skull!"*
Nor is the Bishop *solus* in this theme;
Pope, Cardinal, and ev'ry Bishop too,
Priest, Parson, Presbyter, and ev'n the clown
Who toils in honesty each passing day,
Save Sunday, when, for scanty recompense,
He drudges through the *service* of the church
With scarcely scholarship to make him read.
All, ev'ry one of ev'ry sect and name,
Who prays or preaches by a legal act,
Or voluntary call from bigot mob,
Endeavours, as the ground-work of the "trade,"
Deep to inculcate on the vulgar mind
The dread idea of a "call divine"—
Else who his intellect would paralyse,
To stoop and cringe submissively through life,
To drag and draw oppression's loathsome load
In brutal drudgery, and tax and tithe;
And, more degrading, more immoral still,
To lift his eye in venerable awe,

* This merely alludes to his peculiar antipathy against material existences, as it must be admitted that, in spite of all his whimsical and extravagant notions, Bishop Berkley was both a very amiable and a very talented man.

Suffus'd with homage to his fellow-man;
Wer't not that priests proclaim the Right of Kings,
And man is taught that priests are sent from God.
But what is Monarchy? Alas, the time
Is scarce emerging from the stingy womb
Of dark futurity, when man, unchain'd
By blinded superstition's rigid law,
Shall exercise his noblest faculty,
And, in a voice that must and will be heard,
Explode the mighty mystery of kings:
Meantime, shrewd common sense, known to the world
For downright sophistry and falsehood bland,
And curs'd by clergy as the imp of hell,
Insinuates with guileful sorcery
That Monarchy, in ages far remote,
Was manufactur'd by designing priests
To aid them in a mutual attack
Upon the liberties of humankind;
And, marv'lous mystery! it is hinted, too,
That Monarchy in turn created priests,
And that in indolence and sluggish ease,
For generations past, o'er all the world
Creating and created, they have liv'd
In wanton revelry on others' toil;

And, as a recompense, would have us think
That all their energies and healthful hours
In prayerful watchings zealously are spent,
To guard our bodies and to save our souls—
When, in reality, they only make
Both flesh and spirit drag their pond'rous chains,
And laugh the strange duplicity of man;—
This may be false—for who that honours God
And loves religion, would presume to trust
The sceptic reasoning of Common-sense!
  Religion next our careful thoughts demand,
Because, forsooth, 'tis fraught with vast expense,
And modestly pretends to cost us nought—
Besides 'tis universal, and bestows
On all its proselytes in ev'ry land,
Of ev'ry version of its countless creeds,
Peace, virtue, happiness on earth below,
And never-ending glory in the skies—
Strange mutinomial being, that appears
In ev'ry form and opposite extreme,
Which suit the varied fancies of our race;
And yet to ev'ry paltry sect appears
Its own exclusive privilege and pride.
  Hindoo and Mussleman, Chinese and Jew,

Birman and Persian, Christian and the tribes
Who worship the Great Spirit—all seem pleas'd
That each has got religion to himself—
All have their special faiths—the Christian, most
Indulg'd and favour'd by the higher powers,
Like Joseph with the mess, has more than all;
Yea *fifty* creeds, all equally divine!
But creeds, unless by practice aided, seem,
To me at least, (I speak but for myself,)
A tinkling cymbal or a sounding brass,
And stand for nothing in my cash account;
Yet stamped sterling are they to be found
In ev'ry corner of all Christian lands,
Like paper guineas in the British isles,
Not more than value for a comic song.
Yes, Faith is all—the wonder-working stone
Of ancient alchymy, which turns to gold
The veriest dross and filth of human deeds.—
Men cheat, and lie, and steal, and swear, and drink,
Sell drink, and swindle till a fortune's rear'd
Upon the ruins of their neighbours' peace,
Then capture heaven by violence of faith—
The man who in a stol'n coat keeps the church
Is deem'd much better, more akin to grace,

Than he who lost the coat and has no choice,
But spend his Sabbaths by the family hearth:
Yet faith is just a phantom, a mere sound,
A spiritual monster, which devours
With blood and bonfires its own progeny.
The *good man* needs it not—his gen'rous deeds
Are ample passports to internal peace;
And faith's invisible—no man has seen
Or known aught of its essence, save the scenes
Of rancour and destruction which it spreads
Around its own mad votaries, whose deaths
Are hail'd as trophies of its wondrous power!
See the blood-thirsty Calvin canonis'd
For canting treachery:*—then see, ah! see,
The man of mind—the rev'rend Priestly, doom'd
To save his carcase from his burning home,
By seeking shelter in a far strange land!
And this is faith—th' imperial gauge which priests
Set up to measure all morality.
Alas! that men should bow to such a judge.

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* In order to justify these epithets, I refer the reader to Calvin's Letters, addressed to William Trie, on the martyrdom of Dr. Servetus.

Was Fenelon the worse for what he believ'd?
Would Howard's sympathies been aught the less
Though rooted in a wand'ring Arab's breast?
Or did faith neutralise the cure'd effects
Of fawning Cromwell's cruel acts of blood?
Ah! no—"worth makes the man," one gen'rous deed—
One act of charity, to soothe the pang
Of suff'ring nature, surely reckons more
In virtue's estimate than all the faith,
Ev'n mountain-moving faith, of all mankind.
Then, why is faith the measure of the man,
To save or damn him in the social state?
I knew a man—and though for twenty years
I've studied man with anxious scanning eye,
Of all the race I knew but him alone—
I knew him in his childhood, ere the world
Had melted in example's crucible
Those innate principles which habit's mould
Was only able to subdue in part.
Born in adversity, the ruthless blast
Of haggard poverty, in furious gusts,
Howl'd o'er his infant cradle, and benumb'd
The warmer feelings of a gen'rous soul.
When slumb'ring infancy had pass'd away,

And childhood's eye first woke and look'd abroad,
'Twas but to see the vast unfathom'd depth
Of degradation circling his birth,
To mark the barriers of distinction, rear'd,
By social ignorance and selfish pride,
Between himself and mankind, and to feel
His own impotency to burst the chain.
Yea, ere his tongue had learn'd to speak his thoughts,
He saw himself an outcast, and eschew'd
The sports and pastimes of his young compeers,
And, like a thing of solitude, shrunk back
From observation, and in some lone spot
Enjoy'd his little play-things as in stealth.
None had he injur'd, nor had conscience dar'd
To dart her sting, envenom'd with remorse,
In his young heart—and yet he ween'd he felt,
In the suspicious glance and petty jibe
Of jesting juvenile, that latent guilt
Lurk'd in the tatters of a ragged robe.
In boyhood, too, he shun'd companionship,
And hid his poverty in the recluse
And solitary wand'rings on the wild.
No school-boy days were his, save those he spent
In deep domestic misery's sad school;

Nor learn'd he aught but hardships, toil, and grief,
Save what he learn'd from her who gave him birth,
And she, though sunk in withering wretchedness,
Blanch'd and heart-broken with a secret grief,
Was simple, and affectionate, and mild,
Retaining still the virtues of her youth,
And teaching prudence and good-will to all.
She lov'd him for his strange, unsocial mood—
She taught him to distinguish right and wrong—
Gave maxims, morals, and examples such
As stamp'd her image on his fragile soul,
The faithful monitor of after-life;
In scholarship she taught him how to read,
And this was all herself had e're receiv'd.

Companionless no more—at morn and eve,
Noontide and midnight, books became his mates;
He thought and read, and read and thought again,
And reason'd and refuted, till the mind,
Absorb'd in speculation, had forgot
The sports and toils, the nourishment and sleep,
Sought by the welfare of his feeble frame;
And till the principles of human acts
Pass'd in review before him, in the form
Of active errors, and the pond'rous mass

Of what are call'd opinions seem'd a host
Of vague conjectures or prepost'rous dreams,
Learn'd like a language, and by mellowing time
And honour'd ancestry made almost good;
He saw men sever'd by the deeds that sprung
As legal offspring of a few bad thoughts,
Which interest first created for herself,
And ignorance had still allow'd to live:
He wish'd for power to dissipate the dream,
And drive delusions wholly from the world,
But the morose, unsocial diffidence
Of childhood hover'd o'er his best resolves,
And sung invidious of his mean descent.
Years came and went, and change succeeded change,
Boyhood and youth, and love and wedlock's joys,
Pass'd o'er him like a transient broken dream,
And stored the mind with unconnected shreds
Of pleasing melancholy.—Manhood's prime
Gave vigour to his feelings, and he tried
To tell mankind their errors, or, at least,
The fruitful sources of all human woe;
But prejudice repulsive shook him off,
And scatter'd infamy around his path,
Till his heart sicken'd, and the wilder dreams

Of dark misanthropy crept o'er his soul.
Again he shun'd society, and o'er
The dark, dull prospects of his species mourn'd.
And if at times a casual gleam of hope
Sprung from the contemplation of the vast
And mighty energies of mind, which soon
As rous'd would burst th' imperial chain
Of hallow'd superstition, and anon
Proclaim emancipation to mankind,—
The joy was momentary, and the blest
Bright prospect, like heaven's lucid gleam,
Sunk in the deeper darkness of the cloud
That dim'd the daily actions of the race.
His soul, though sensitive, was destitute
Of those soft sympathies which lookers-on
Can trace in the dissolving symptoms, tears—
The hardships of his early days had ting'd
With mute indifference to all human woe,
The facial features, which in manhood seem'd
To indicate the apathetic mind;
Yet was he not a stoic: his life's blood
Sped warm and hurriedly through all his veins,
Nor carried in its stream one callous drop—
He only felt too much; and those sharp pangs

Of gen'rous sympathy that softly squeeze
The tear-drop from the eye of souls less firm,
Wrung his internal mechanism, till all
The nervous fabric sunk beneath the shock,
And shew'd a frame bow'd down and paralys'd.
He lov'd all mankind—yea, he could have died
To save from ignorance his fellow-men:
And yet they hated him; and if at times
Their evil deeds or wanton ridicule
Would fling his best philosophy far back,
Till, unrestrain'd, his soul was left to foam
In wreckless rage, which threaten'd to destroy
The vulgar objects of her heated wrath,
These frantic gusts of passion were anon
Shap'd into deadly weapons by his foes,
To wound his feelings and to crush his pride.
He knew these bursts of demon rage were wrong—
He felt their sad effects upon his frame—
He saw they but demoralis'd the man,
And rent the harmony of social life:
But nature is omnipotent, and oft
Will thunder through all artificial guards.—
And his was wild as the untutor'd storm
That sweeps the forest in destructive ire;

And fraud and falsehood, cruelty, deceit,
Oppression, lewdness, folly of all grades,
And the malignant insult of the proud,
Awoke the tempest which in fury burst
The brittle barrier rear'd by sager thoughts—
Yet lack'd he not the scoffings of the crowd
To lead him to repentance for his crimes.
Ah! no, he felt apart from all the world,
In the dark depths of midnight solitude,
The gnawings of the worm—the poison'd sting—
And while deep sleep, and pleasing hallow'd dreams,
Embrac'd all nature, in some dark recess
He wept the agonies of his sad soul,
But never, never wash'd away the stains
Which momentary impulse had impress'd.
  Yes, yes, he was a strange anomaly,
A thing of equilibrium, just pois'd
By passing circumstance,—now mad, now wild,
Now mourning for the miseries of man,
Now foaming wildly o'er their unjust deeds,
And then, in the delirium of remorse,
Weeping his own intolerance that scowl'd,
Unmercifully harsh, on erring man:
Loving and shunning the vast multitude,

He wander'd through the crowd—yet mingled not—
Its pastimes, pleasures, festivals, and feasts,
Pursuits and policy, and holy rites,
Appear'd as flimsy follies in a group,
Void of all sense or meaning, wholly void
Of tendency to elevate mankind.
Yea, ev'n in worship he was found alone,
Strolling afar upon some mountain's brow,
Or in the deep and distant loneliness
Of the wild, sunless, and unpeopled glen,
Tracing, in rude sublimity of rocks,
Ravines, deep chasms, and cataract's hoarse roar,
Or foaming eddy or the whirling pool,
The grander glories of this little world;
Or when the thunder's hoarse, tremendous voice
Rent the black cloud and shook the atmosphere,
Till earth rock'd as recoiling from her doom,
The living fire that darted through the gloom,
The torrent gushing from the bursted cloud,
The gloom itself, and the fierce tumult, woke
The warmest adorations of his soul!
He lov'd, he woo'd, he bow'd before the storm,
In deep and awful homage to the power
That thus sublimely toss'd the elements!

'Twas Nature's power—he worship'd Nature, she
Was all he knew of God.—He lov'd her charms
And woo'd her beauties too; but most he lov'd
Her living progeny, and could have shar'd
His morsel with the meanest of his race.
The flutt'ring insect and the crawling worm
Were sacred in his sight, and never once,
Designedly, from him endur'd a pang;
Yea, ev'n the mouse that feasted on his corn,
Was kindly suffer'd to enjoy its meal,
And then permitted to depart in peace.—
Yet holy men, whose practice would disgrace
The lawless savage, spurn'd him from the world
As one infected with a moral death—
An epidemic fiend—a guilty wretch—
A dang'rous enemy to humankind,
Because, forsooth, he trusted not to *faith*.—
Yes, Faith, thou art a demon, and thy deeds
Are proof sufficient of the fearless charge.
Down from the honest Stephen ston'd to death,
To where the pious Huss flam'd on the pile,
Thence through the hosts of Scotia's martyr'd sons
Through Cromwell's papist slaught'ring age, and then
To where Rathcormac's murders slaked thy rage,

In ev'ry land and under ev'ry name,
But chiefly Christian and Mahometan,
Thou hast been drunk with blood of honest men—
All parties have been heretic in turn,
And thou hast serv'd as hangman to them all—
'Twas thee—the very same unhallow'd fiend
Who lit the torch for Jerome's fun'ral pile,
And blew the faggot where Servetus burn'd.
Thy burning days are gone—thou'rt grieved for this—
Thou hast grown old in crime—thy iron teeth
No more can tear thy victim limb from limb;
But thou can'st gnash thy haggard toothless gums,
And gnaw men's characters and moral worth
With that same hellish spirit as of old—
Thou art unchang'd in nature but less strong:
I know thy power—I know thy venom too.—
Yes, I have felt thy dire malignity:
I care not—dread not—shrink not from thy *sting*,
Though thou should'st starve me from the human world,
Nor would I change my feelings and my fate
For those of thy best votary, though worlds,
Yea worlds of gold were freely given to boot.
Faith, war, and whiskey, have, perhaps, done more
In maiming morals and destroying life,

Than all the evils which mortality
And laws of change make incident to man.
And surely death, ev'n in its common forms,
Has fears and pains sufficient of itself,
And needeth not man's artifical aids.
I stood beside the bed, the death-bed drear,
Of one whose early life was twined with mine.
He was a man, in manhood's active stage,
But poverty and grief had made him old.
Extended on his humble bed he lay
Emaciated, pale, and ill at ease;
He toss'd his arms and struggled hard for breath,
And through the window, open'd to give air,
Gaz'd with a mournful eye, as if to say,
"Farewell, gay world"—he fear'd the approach of night,
For many long and weary nights he'd pass'd,
And day but chang'd the scene of weariness—
I watch'd him painfully, methought I felt
A sorrow equal almost to his own;
My soul flew to the past—to childhood's days,
And, with a cruel faithfulness, rak'd up
Th' endearing incidents of former times.
He was my senior school-boy, and full oft
Had borne me on his back—taught me my task—

Claim'd crimes and floggings justly due to me,
And fought my battles with mischievous boys;
He made me balls, and boats, and tops, and kites,
And all the playthings, which his better skill
And more experience easily performed;
And oft, when sick, or hurt, or vex'd, sat down
And wept, and sooth'd me with a flattering tale.
Together still we ate and slept, and toil'd,
And grew to manhood lovingly, and now
The golden ties, which threatened to give way,
Seem'd stronger than they e'er had been before;
I saw and trembled with the rending pang
That heav'd his struggling heart,—I heard him speak
Of his approaching end, his widow'd wife
And helpless family thrown random-like
Upon a careless world; I felt the sting
That such reflections give a sadden'd soul;
I saw the blank that never could be fill'd,
And, turning from his sight, burst out and wept.
His youngest son, a child of three years old,
Play'd on the floor, unconscious of his loss,
And drawing near the bed-side, meant to ask
His usual question for his father's health—
A question which for many days and weeks

Had been but formal courtesy in all—
He lisp'd out, "Father," nor had time for more—
The dying man gaz'd wildly on the child,
Then drew him closer in a last embrace,
And in the fervour of a father's love,
Shed tears upon his face, and cried, "My son!
My son!" then in a dreadful agony
Of grief drove hence the boy. Th' appaling mass
Of homeless hunger, nakedness, and cold,
And all the train of orphan misery,
In one short moment rush'd upon his mind.
His phrenzied eye look'd nothing but despair;
His faint heart swell'd and heav'd—his soul recoil'd—
The life strings forcibly were torn in twain—
He grasp'd my hand in death's convulsive grasp,
And shook his head, and with a shudder died!
  Such are the horrors of the poor man's death—
More agonising ev'n than death itself,—
And *artificial* too; for why should man
Forbode starvation to his orphan young,
Left in a world where he himself has toil'd,
Assisting to accumulate such wealth,
As from its vast abundance scarce finds room,
Were't not that self has eaten justice up,

And canker'd to the root the social tree?
Men could (I speak collectively) prevent
One-half of all the fears and pangs of death,
And almost two-halfs of the ills of life;
And yet to aggravate these miseries
Has grown a sort of science in the world.
The malefactor, whom vindictive law
Would teach the moral virtues in a rope,
Is doom'd to linger weary days and nights
In lonely pond'rings in his dreary cell,
Nor sees the light nor knows how time goes on,
Save from the warning voice of dungeon clock,
Whose ev'ry stroke comes through the gloomy vaults
And strikes his ear—nay, strikes his fainting heart
With all the horrors of a dreadful death!
Thus days and weeks roll on, and not a ray
Of hope can reach his soul—the moments all
That bring successive hours, are sadly spent
In close communion with the dying pang.
And is this Justice? Then the horrid deed
For which the culprit died was merciful?
He kill'd his victim with a single blow,
And Justice kills him with a thousand deaths.
Death's agony is just th' instinctive pang

Of chill, cold horror which the being feels
In parting with its old affinities;
And gen'rous nature of herself employs
Far milder means to separate the bonds
Than wonder-working man has yet devis'd.
The tiger heralds not his fatal leap;
The earthquake closes, and the scene is o'er;
The lightning strikes, and leaves its victim dead;
And the great ocean heaves, and foams, and yawns,
And swallows ship and crew ere hope has died!
But man pursues man to the bed of death,
Already wretched with chill penury,
And there, before his shatter'd mind, drags up
The startling errors of his bygone days,
Adds pang to pang, till in the lonesome grave
His fated victim is securely lodged;
Nor stops his vengeance here—it soars away,
And in imagination feeds itself
With chains and torments in another world!
O man, renounce the rigour of thy creed,
Learn mercy from the power that fosters thee,
Nor charge All-Goodness with such hateful rage
As even thy vindictiveness would spurn.
See Nature o'er her common family

Shed blessings equal to its varied spheres,
Quite reckless of its colours, climes, or creeds—
The Persian bowing humbly to the fire,
Godama's millions with their nameless rites,
The Christian with his Trinity, and he
Who worships the Great Spirit of the wild,
Are all supplied from Nature's lib'ral hand,
And share alike her pleasures and her plagues.
The torrent sweeps its district, and has done—
The conflagration rages, and then dies—
Volcanoes bury towns, and are at rest—
And the tornado desolates whole lands,
And sings itself into a pleasing calm;—
All things relent, save that unyielding power
Of man's disorder'd fancy, which nor death,
Nor graves, nor planetary limits bind.
Alas, that men should thus imbitter life,
And give to death a thousand venom'd stings,
With *words* to which the most gigantic minds,
Nay, all the minds of all the men that live,
Have been unable to attach a *thought!*—
Alas, that men should tremble and turn pale
Beneath the beadsman's bugbears, or at death
Should purchase prayers to torture their own souls.

I hate these purchased prayers; they savour much
Of what the world calls *proxy*, and I hate
All proxies, for the errors they produce.
Men rule, and rob, and fight, and woo, and wed,
Get heirs and wealth, and often happiness,
By proxy—and Hibernia's gen'rous sons
Eat half their oats by proxy, *and are starv'd!*
Then he who prays by proxy, it is plain,
Must in the end be *saved* by proxy too.

BOOK IV.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Change of Opinions—Address to Britain on the Value of her Moral Heroes—Present Moral Aspect and Future Prospect of Britain—Religion—its Ameliorating Influence and certain Adaptation to Regenerate the World—the Conclusion.

"That altar of oppression, fed with rites
More savage than the priests of Moloch taught,
Shall be consumed amid the fire of justice;
The rays of truth shall emanate around,
And the whole world be lighted!"

SOUTHEY.

OPINIONS change—I yet could touch the time
When inexperience, guided by the voice
Of idle rumour, or unpolished faith,
By age made popular, had made me deem
The world a bloated and unshapely mass,
With undisguised scoundrelism replete—
Where every man, of every creed and clime,
Devised and studied every sordid scheme,

Thought, talked, and reasoned—ply'd all subtile arts,
And wily stratagems, and borrowed smiles,
And shallow sophistry, to circumvent,
Cheat, pilfer, plunder, or by fraud or force,
Of reputation, property, or life,
All less experienced villains than himself.
  Yea, I remember, with a thoughtful smile,
The flimsy bugbears of my early days:
When such suspicion lingered on my soul,
I shrunk like timid wild-goat from my friend,
And fled from my own shadow!—not because
'Twas like a ghost or devil—these I scorned—
But fear, still more romantic, fill'd my breast—
Fear of substantial human flesh and blood,
In ambush lurking to destroy my life:
Not for my gold (this thing I seldom had),
But just for very bare-faced murder's sake:
In short, I deemed that every mortal's aim
Was to inflict on all the human race
(Himself excepted), by whatever means,
The greatest possible degree of wo.
  And, strange anomaly! I then believed
That these huge murders and unhallowed acts
Transpired beneath the eye of mercy's God,

Who ruled the world to satisfy himself,
Possessing, meantime, boundless power and love,
Demanding justice and humanity.
  Opinions change—but whence are they? or what?
This is philosophy, and well I wot
No connoisseur in this deep lore am I—
Yet have I learned from observation's book,
And that stiff-necked and stubborn pedagogue,
Experience—that man, in every age,
Crosses the threshold of life's theatre
Unburthened with opinions, and receives
The hackneyed notions of his paltry tribe—
And all opinions, subtile and absurd,
And vain and vicious, rational and just,
At different periods, in all climes have swayed.
  Not so the people will; but some event,
Uninfluenced by popular demand,
Starts up, to break the dull monotony,
And change the circumstance whence arise
The faith and practice of the passive crowd.
Men do not choose opinions as they choose
The colour of their coats, else who'd believe,
That after drawling out a wretched life
He stood a thousand chances to be damned?

All our ideas are abruptly reared
By some externals, seen, or heard, or felt;
While yet the mind is unprepared to choose,
Though choice were proffered—which but seldom comes:
Man is the child of customs and of creeds;
He who believes and he who disbelieves,
Make not themselves, but stand on equal ground,
The objects nor of censure nor applause.
Who would despise the undesigning boast
Of Marian Islander, who never heard
Of other lands or people than his own,
And simply deem'd his island was the world?
Or who would plunge in shades of endless wo
The nimble African, because his limbs
Danced not the worship of the Shakers' God?
We learn opinions as we learn a trade;
And I would tread life's weary round again,
And wander o'er her dark, untrodden wilds,
To meet the man whom system had not bow'd;
But who display'd in every thought and act
The uncontaminated Nature's son.
Opinions change, and seldom for the worse:
I've shook the film of terror from mine eyes,
And look'd with Nature's optics o'er the world,

And walk'd abroad, and mingled with mankind;—
They are not demons,—no, they shrink from blood;
Nor woo they evil for the evil's sake,
But entertain a sense of right and wrong,
And partly sympathise with all their race.
'Tis true that fawning priests, in league with kings,
Have seared the nobleness of human kind,
And rear'd distinctions in the name of God,
Which have polluted and disgrac'd the world;
But still the millions, urg'd by nature's law,
Employ their energies in search of peace;
And though misguided by fallacious creeds,
Would darkly grope instinctively for good.
And this great moving mass—this living crowd—
This toiling, sweating, bustling multitude,
Of simple, honest industry and worth,
Where each pursues his own peculiar good,
And rather forwards than impedes the whole,
Impell'd, mayhap, by avarice or fame,
But not so selfish as to disavow
All human sympathy, or feel inclined
To scatter desolation o'er the world;—
And this is modern mankind, spite of all
That creed and system-makers have devised.

But, ah, how noble—ah, how dignified,
Those glorious spirits that the world can boast,
Who, rising in their might, attempt to shake
The mystery of many years, and shew
That man creates the misery of man;
And, in defiance of the scowling brow
Of lawless trafficker in sacred things,
Proclaim the equal dignity of mind!

And far and wide, where'er the human form
Is check'd or chain'd by ignorance or law,
Their sympathy is wafted on the breeze,
To break the bondage or to soothe the wo:
No creed is theirs, save universal good,
Nor country, save the family of man.

These are the heroes—these the patriot chiefs—
That war against the curse that sears the earth
Like gleaming constellation brightening o'er
A dark horizon; or—forgive the thought—
A kind of human deities that breathe
A moral grandeur o'er their injured race;
These brighten life, and make me love the world.

Yes, Britain, spite of all thy wicked deeds,
My native land, I love thy healthy shores,
And cannot fail to love, ev'n more than these

Thy giant minds, that fetterless have soar'd,
Spurning the trammels of thy phantom creeds,
And smiling on thy puny barriers rear'd
To check their aspirations, boldly dar'd,
By tangible experiment, to teach
The universal, inexclusive God,
Whose vast infinity of power and love
Can but be known in Nature's wondrous laws,
That act inflexibly alike for all.
Yea, I could kneel, and weep, and worship, where
The ashes of a Newton or a Locke,
Pope, Paine, or Priestley, mingle with the dust,
For these, in part, redeem'd the human mind,
And shook the shadows that erewhile bedim'd
The moral grandeur of our little world:
These lit the taper which became a torch,
Gleaming afar with intellectual rays,
To fling the sun-beams of eternal truth
O'er crowded city and sequester'd cot
Of ev'ry clime and country trode by man,
Till Mind shall learn its dignity and power,
And smile upon the little grovelling things
That once had held it in submissive thrall.
See Bentham's morals threat'ning to destroy

All civil errors, from the gilded throne
To where the culprit struggles in the rope,
And wishing, spite of all corruption's laws,
To shew that mercy is the way to peace—
And Bentham died—and Bowring lives to tell
(In the blest practice of his Master's worth)
How great was Bentham—he himself the heir
Of all his virtues and his talents too—
Another link in that stupendous chain
Which binds all Time's intelligence in one,
And, still descending, clasps a wider range,
Till earth's whole family shall be redeem'd!
Ha! sceptic, dost thou smile? think'st thou that man
Is doom'd to endless ignorance and toil?
Wilt thou still urge his past misdeeds as proofs
Of his incapability to learn?
Then where is feudalism? where now his ghosts?
His goblins, *brownies*, fairies, where are they?
Or where the fires which Reformation's priests
Heap'd round the carcases of wither'd dames?
These all are gone—nor died they of themselves—
No, superstition, interest, and guile,
Defended, cherish'd, sooth'd them to the last,
Till mind, with her celestial light, dispell'd

The gloom where ignorance had rear'd her shrine.
Has Combe but written for the passing hour?
Have Simpson's lectures died within the hall?
Or have the *facts* of Owen, and his wealth,
Been flung like music on a tempest's breast?
No, these have echoes in ten thousand hearts,
Which, like electric sparks, shall fleetly drive
Down through the thinking current of the world,
Till the last vestige of corruption's power
Shall shake and crumble with the mighty sound.
  Yes, rear your heads, ye moral patriots! rear
Your dauntless spirits—time is fleeting fast,
And 'neath the covert of his stealthy wings
Bears to oblivion's unexplor'd domains
The obloquy the world has flung at you:
Men of all creeds are bowing to your worth,
And worth is rising over ev'ry creed.
The feeble Channing rears his awful voice
And preaches morals, while a list'ning world
Forgets its *faiths*, and but admires the man.
  And is religion nothing but a dream—
A state machine—a thing of creeds and priests—
A war of words—an insubstantial sound?
O what impiety! as soon could man

Subsist upon the sunbeams' subtile rays,
As, with his present feelings, think to live
Without religion in his social state;
Yes, thou, Religion, art the balm of life—
The essence of the soul—th' exclusive source
Of real happiness—'tis thou alone
Canst heave the thrilling pang of sympathy,
And mitigate earth's countless varied woes:
Thou was the friend of Plato, and the Man
Of Nazereth preached thee when he said to men,
"*Love ye each other as I have lov'd you.*"
The poor Mahometant, whose thirst of wine
Had made him Christian, drawing near his end
Flings off his novel creed, and clings again
To the romantic notions of his youth.
Yet, wanting *thee*, despite of both his faiths,
Dies in the horrors of recanting dread;
While the lone Indian, with but half a creed,*
If sooth'd by thee, when in the hour of death,
His weary soul can smile with pleasing joy
On all the actions of his former life,
And feel the dying taper gather strength,

* I mean the North American Indian.

And brighten till the last long breath is drawn
In all the sunshine of eternal hope.
Ev'n now, amid the horror I've portray'd
Of war and desolation, caus'd by faith,
By selfish rancour and the love of wealth,
I see religion lift her glorious form
From the deep slumbers of a long dark night,
And fling her holy radiance o'er the world.
Men of all ranks, all stations, and all creeds,
Unite together in one noble aim
To curb the guilt and misery of man.
Asylums for the sick, the dumb, the blind,
The houseless and insane, proclaim aloud
That ev'n the wealthy feel religion's power.
From man to man, from clime to clime afar,
Th' important question runs, nor runs in vain,
" What can be done to lessen human woe ?"
The time draws on—I know 'twill surely come—
When none shall bid his fellow *know the Lord.*
Ev'en now, methinks I see, though far away,
Religion's glory rising like a sun
Of dazzling splendour,—small at first it seems,
Then stretching, it expands till land by land
Is buried in its brightness. The sad groan

Of human agony grows faint and faint;
Pale poverty, with her lank features, dies;
Oppression withers like a blighted tree,
And lewd corruption, fleeing from the light
Like some aw'd fugitive, takes to the hills.
But still the brilliant conqueror rolls on
O'er town and country like a mighty flood
Of glowing lustre. It ascends the hills,
In writhy volumes, as the curling mist,
Till the last peak of earth's last mountain seems
A solitary speck, whereon, at length,
Corruption's votary takes his final stand:
Like shipwreck'd mariner on some black rock,
He gazes hopeless on the bright abyss,
Sees no escape, and feels the rising flood
Enveloping his limbs—he looks aghast!
The brightness gains upon him, and he frowns,
And writhes, and twists, but cannot get away,
Till nought, save the last finger, can be seen
Shaking defiance at its mortal foe.
It sinks anon, and all the world is light!
Peace, love, and hope, and charity, now meet,
Shake hands with righteousness, and sing aloud,
In one harmonious universal song,
"O happy earth, reality of heaven!"

CONCLUSION.

HARP of the heather, I have woo'd thee long,
And thou hast shar'd my happiness and woe;
Our task is done, we've measur'd our last song:
No more again our rustic numbers flow,
The sympathies that warm'd us cease to glow;
The youthful vigour of our strain has died,
Thy riper notes rise sullenly and slow,
And more to earth's dull drudgery allied;
But still I love thee more than wooer loves his bride!

But ah! my harp, youth's sunny season's fled,
The poetry of life is gone, the cloud
Of stern adversity frowns o'er my head;
My young light visions sink beneath its shroud:
Opinions now have chang'd—I feel less proud
Of what in former years I deem'd life's goal;
The smiles, the shouts, the plaudits of the crow'd,—
These are but flimsy honours, and, in whole,
Have little power to fling calm sunshine o'er the soul.

We've sung to please ourselves—perhaps, "the World"
Will scarcely please the world, as only few
Are pleas'd with their own portraits, but have hurl'd
Their censures on the honest limner, who
Had been more prais'd had he portray'd less true.
Men will be bad, and flatter'd for their crimes,
Despite, my harp, of aught that we can do,
It is the genial spirit of the times.
Who doubts this truth may read the "Tournament" in
rhymes!

The world may blame us, but we care not now;
Its frowns and favours both come to an end.
The strain now sung we fear not to avow,
And it, like other strains, may find a friend.
I still could woo thee, but would scorn to lend
One string of thine to utter one false quiver.
Vice must be prais'd. I'm poor, but cannot bend:
Pride and necessity thus bid us sever;
And now, my heather harp, farewell, farewell for ever!

APOLOGY.

COURTEOUS READER, — I take it for granted that you have read the foregoing Poem (if it is worthy of that name), and I wish I could also take it for granted that you were satisfied with its sentiments. Perhaps you may object, that I have attributed to Christianity crimes and actions totally opposed to the spirit and genius of that religion; but I hope you are aware that the atrocities committed in India, and other distant countries, to which I have referred, were committed by persons, and under the patronage of a Government calling themselves Christian, and who would have felt far more aggrieved had they been refused the honour of that name; and should those persons, and that government, assume the title of Infidel, and be guilty of the same species of iniquity, Infidelity will just be substituted for Christianity, and denounced with equal candour and severity. It may be said that I have shewn a disposition to be unmercifully harsh upon the Clergy; and in answer, I beg leave to state, without ostentation, that no man can wish more heartily than I,

that the conduct of these men was more worthy of eulogium. In short, I have studied to give expression to no one sentiment, but what will bear the strictest investigation of truth; at the same time, I am fully satisfied that the following opinion of Cowper will, in too many instances, be literally verified:—

> "What's that which brings contempt upon a book
> And him who writes it, though the style be neat,
> The method clear, and argument exact?
> Tell me—and I will tell thee what is truth."

BARKIP, NEAR BEITH,
24th Dec. 1839.

THE END.

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